

GRIGGS & WALNUT PLUME - NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON SITE ACTIVITIES



698918

Sanchez, Petra

From: Durant, Jennah
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2013 9:29 AM
To: Sanchez, Petra
Cc: Fanning, Cynthia; Gilmore, Cathy
Subject: Nice article on Griggs & Walnut open house

Hello,

The Las Cruces Sun-News has an article about the Griggs & Walnut open house. Here's the link:

http://www.lcsun-news.com/las_cruces-news/ci_23899832/one-year-later-open-house-tour-plant

The text is below.

Jennah Durant
6XA
X2287

One year later: Open house to tour plant

By Suzanne Michaels

For the Sun-News

Posted: 08/20/2013 10:11:41 AM MDT



Suzanne Michaels For the Sun-News (null)

Thursday marks the one year anniversary of the return to service of two of the city's water wells at the corner of Griggs Street and Walnut Avenue, and you are invited to come see the special "air stripping technology" that makes it possible to restore the wells to service.

Adrienne Widmer, P.E., Regulatory and Environmental Services administrator, notes, "Over the past year, we've cleaned more than 181 million gallons of water at this plant, and been able to put that finished, clean water into our distribution system." During the past year, Las Cruces Utilities provided more than 6.7 billion

gallons of water from deep wells in and surrounding the city, water that is pulled up, processed, runs through our system, and is used by Las Cruces residences and businesses.

On Thursday, Aug. 22, everyone is welcome to come, tour the water treatment plant at the Griggs/Walnut facility, ask questions of Utilities Water Resources staff, find out how the process works, and enjoy refreshments from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Exactly one year ago the county, state, and EPA cut a large yellow ribbon marking the completion of the construction of the water treatment facility that uses specialized technology to clear the water of a chemical called perchloroethylene, (commonly known as PCE).

PCE is a man-made substance widely used for dry cleaning fabrics and textiles and for metal degreasing operations. Although the source of the PCE spill was never clearly identified, between 1993 and 1995, regular water testing by Las Cruces Utilities started picking up traces of PCE in water wells in the area.

The wells were taken offline individually as they approached the MCL (maximum contaminant level determined by the EPA), so it is important to know that drinking water was never distributed to citizens with levels that exceeded federal Safe Drinking Water standards.

Over the years, remedial investigations and feasibility studies were completed to determine the best available technology to treat the water. The solution to the problem came from a collaboration between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the city of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

Almost 20 years after PCE was initially detected, construction began in 2011 on the Water Treatment Facility; in 2012 the plant was completed and went to work "airstripping" the water. And now, on the anniversary of the ribbon cutting one year ago, everyone is invited to tour the plant to see how it works.

The cleaned water is blended and distributed throughout the conglomerate of wells and distribution lines that makes it possible for utilities to provide safe, clean drinking water to almost 100,000 residents.

The cleanup is estimated to take 15 to 20 years, and will cost an estimated \$330,000 per year, for up to 20 years, for operations and maintenance of the treatment system.

Las Cruces Utilities provides Gas - Water - Wastewater - Solid Waste services to approximately 100,000 Las Cruces residents. Utilities is not funded through tax dollars; it is a cost-of-service provider. You can reach Las Cruces Utilities at 528-3511 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday.

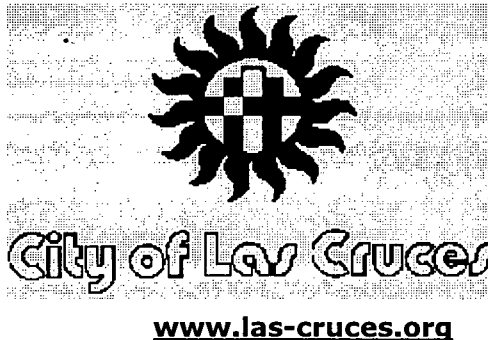


Udell Vigil
<UVigil@las-cruces.org>

To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

08/29/01 03:56 PM

cc:
Subject: water well



NEWS RELEASE/psa

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!

DATE: Aug. 28, 2001

FILE: water well

SUBJECT: **Second City Well Decommissioned**

CONTACT: Udell Vigil, Public Information Office at:

Office (505) 541-2200/TTY (505) 541-2182.

The City of Las Cruces' Water Resources Department has voluntarily taken a second, City water well off line due to groundwater contamination. Well #27 was decommissioned late last week after monthly monitoring for August showed an increase in the level of the contaminant perchloroethylene, or PCE. PCE is a solvent commonly used in the dry cleaning industry. The August tests place the level of PCE in Well #27 at 4.9 micrograms per liter, up from 4.5 micrograms per liter in July. The maximum contamination level, or MCL, for PCE is 5 micrograms per liter. "We've been monitoring tests results closely, and wanted to take the well off line before it reached the maximum contamination level," says Gilbert Morales, Director of Water Resources for the City of Las Cruces. The City voluntarily decommissioned

Well #18 in 1995 when detected levels of PCE were near the MCL.

At the request of the City, the New Mexico Environment Department increased water monitoring from quarterly to monthly. The City's request for increased monitoring followed the June 14th announcement by the EPA, that it had added to its Superfund list, the area of contamination located in the Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street area. The Superfund designation will allow the federal government to investigate and locate the source of the contamination, and pay for it's clean up.

For more information, contact the City of Las Cruces Water Resources Department at (505) 528-3515 or Udell Vigil at the City of Las Cruces Public Information Office at (505) 541-2200/TTY (505) 541-2182.



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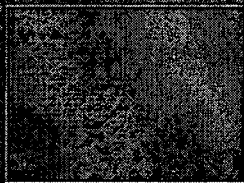
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Article Last Updated: Monday, May 19, 2003 - 11:41:35 PM MST

City OKs annexation of 235 East Mesa acres

By Christopher Schurtz

Sun-News report er

The largest annexation by the city of Las Cruces in a decade was unanimously approved Monday by the Las Cruces City Council.

Ted Scanlon, who is developing the 235-acre Mission Hills development for land-owner Phillippos Philippou, projected the city will make more than \$9.7 million in tax revenues over the next five years from the development.

In addition, Scanlon said based on his figures, it will cost the city, and its taxpayers, only \$132,000 over the next five years for the city to maintain streets within the new area, once they are handed over to the city.

After that, he said, it would cost the city \$44,000 a year for street maintenance.

The newly annexed area lies just east of Sonoma Ranch development and the High Range neighborhood and includes a mixed zoning similar to the surrounding areas.

Community Development Director Brian Denmark said Mission Hills conforms to the city's comprehensive plan dictating growth.

An agreement signed by owners of Mission Hills and Sonoma Ranch to limit the height of buildings close to Sonoma Ranch to 23 feet was included in the master plan also approved by the City Council, as well as a 60-foot limit on all building in Mission Hills.

Mission Hills will incur 100 percent of all utility, street, curb and impact fees, with the city incurring "zero percent" of development costs, Denmark said.

"The city would not be responsible for any of the up-front development costs," Denmark said.

Developers in Mission Hills and along the planned Sonoma Ranch Boulevard extension, which crosses through Mission Hills, will pay the more than \$1 million estimated cost of the yet-to-be-built street, he said.

It will cost Mission Hills developers more than \$3 million total to install all utilities, interior streets (which will be deeded to the city at no cost) and the Sonoma Ranch Boulevard extension.

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Several residents expressed concern for the impact of the new development, with its projected 3,500 new residents, on the city's water system.


But Utilities Director Jorge Garcia said the city's system can handle the growth, though new wells may have to be drilled in coming years (the city has more than 10,000 acre-feet of new drilling rights for the Jornada Basin under the East Mesa).

The tax revenue would come from gross receipts taxes on construction (about \$3.5 million) and commercial activities (\$3.2 million), as well as some \$360,000 a year in property taxes and more than \$1 million in development impact fees.

Scanlon said the development will include everything from affordable housing to houses in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range.

Christopher Schurtz can be reached at cschurtz@lcsun-news.com.

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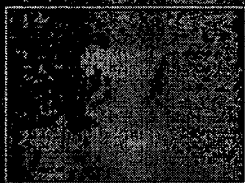
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Article Last Updated: Monday, May 19, 2003 - 11:41:37 PM MST

Commissioner seeks to return co. manager

By T.S. Hopkins

Sun-News report er

Dña Ana County Commissioner D. Kent Evans is leading a movement to return David King as county manager, and one of the three commissioners previously opposed to King appears open to the idea.

King has said he was forced to resign April 8 during an executive session. Had King not resigned, Commissioners Art Terrazas, Gilbert Apodaca and Oscar Butler were prepared to vote to fire him.

Evans now wants his fellow commissioners to rethink their position at their May 27 meeting.

"I would hope we have enough votes to negotiate a contract with David," Evans said Monday. "As I have said many times, I think David King is the best thing that has happened to this county in years."

King couldn't be reached for comment on whether he'd consider returning as county manager.

Evans said he doesn't know if he can get the third vote to go with his and that of Commission Chairman Paul Curry, who has supported King. Terrazas said he'd consider the idea, which could shift the majority of the five-member commission on the issue.

"It's intriguing," Terrazas said. "I would have to weigh the options. I don't even know if David wants the job again."

Apodaca said as far as he's concerned, King's tenure as county manager is over.

"Mr. Evans has cut a deal with Mr. Terrazas," Apodaca said. "He (Evans) is trying to circumvent the process of selecting a new county manager."

Butler couldn't be reached for comment Monday.

Evans said he has had conversations with many different segments of the community after King's departure and had not heard anything negative about King's performance as county manager.

The county is currently advertising nationwide for a new county manager.

"I understand there have been quite a few responses," Evans said. "But

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there is nothing to say we have to choose someone else."

King had been under increasing criticism in recent months from commissioners unhappy with county staff over some work-related issues.

A major problem King faced was retention of staff, according to some county employees, who said low pay is a big reason for the turnover of personnel. County estimates pegged the turnover at 30 percent annually.

King accepted the county manager post in January 2001.

With the departure of King, the commission appointed county Finance Director Brian Haines as interim county manager until a new county manager is named.

Coupled with the appointment of Haines, the commission is in the process of negotiating a new contract with Assistant County Manager Mack Wilson. Wilson's contract expires in September.

T.S. Hopkins can be reached at thopkins@lcsun-news.com.

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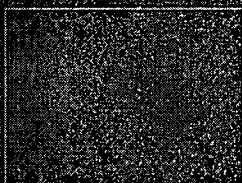
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Article Last Updated: Saturday, May 31, 2003 - 11:55:47 PM MST

Drought impacts local economy

By Marvin Tessneer

Sun-News report er

The negative effects of the prolonged drought are reaching into the Mesilla Valley business community.

Many farmers are doing less field tilling. Some are leaving a few fields unplanted -- fallow in farmers' terms -- according to Brad Achen, a partner with Sun Valley Inc., in Hatch. And many have been forced to spend more money on supplemental wells while cutting back on tractor parts, seed, fertilizer and chemicals.

"They need to put in new parts for the pumps and drill new wells," he said.

The cost for the new parts can run from \$3,000 to \$5,000. For farmers who have to drill new wells to irrigate crops when the Elephant Butte Irrigation surface water allotment is short, the cost is \$60,000 to \$100,000.

EBID's 2003 water allotment is less than one acre-foot -- 11 inches. The normal release is two to three acre-feet, but that is during summers when there is adequate snow runoff.

El Paso Electric Co. has reported increased orders for electrical power to run well pumps.

In April 2002, the power company had 5,707 well pump customers. Last April the number had increased to 5,864, according to the company office.

Farmers are granted a special irrigation rate: \$15 a month plus .04724 cents per kilowatt hour. But the increased use because of water shortages is driving up their operations costs.

Ted Cox, who runs Del Norte Feed and Seed out of Vinton, Texas, said he is seeing a big decrease in corn silage acreage, usually a big crop in this dairy production area. But it requires a great deal of water.

"The corn silage seed sales are way down," he said. "The acreage is almost nonexistent. Many farmers are laying out land if they don't have surface water to irrigate.

"Their morale is pretty low," Cox added. "During the last bad drought, the prices for commodities were better, and they were able to sell what they could grow."

He was referring to the drought during the mid-1950s.

Dickie Ogaz, who normally farms about 500 acres near Garfield, is one of the farmers who is leaving some acreage fallow.

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"I'm leaving out about 22 acres that I've already leased because I don't have the water to irrigate them," he said.

The impact is also being felt in town. Although it does not have concrete sales figures, Shook Tire Center of Las Cruces is seeing a lag in tractor tire sales.

"At this time of year, farmers usually have got their tractors going," Shook general manager Richard Martinez said. "But this year so far, tire sales are down."

Drought-pressured farmers are applying for more loans for new well equipment or to renovate old wells, said Greg Carrasco, Farm Credit lending vice president.

Many farmers need to recondition old wells to make up for the reduced surface water supply. But the wells are aging, many were drilled more than 50 years ago, and the pumps and underground casings have deteriorated.

Farm Credit has processed about 30 well renovation applications, starting in 2002. Loans to redrill a well can range from \$70,000 to \$100,000. And for new equipment the cost can go from \$15,000 to \$25,000, Carrasco said.

The interest rates are from 3.75 percent to 6 percent, "... as low as they have been historically," Carrasco said.

"We have good farmers in this area who are good production managers, and they should be able to weather this drought," Carrasco said. "Probably the biggest problem in financing farmers during a drought is the low prices they get for their products and the investment they make to grow them."

He said it costs an average of \$1,000 per acre for chile in seed, fertilizer, pesticides, water and labor. The investment to prepare and cultivate an acre of land for cotton averages \$600.

And cotton requires less water, which can be delivered under easier management practices, Carrasco said.

Not only does chile, like other vegetables, require more water, it also wants the water in a quick, soil-drenching shot.

"Cotton is less sensitive to irrigation timing," Carrasco said. "What we are hearing is that farmers who still are planting chile and other vegetables are concentrating these fields where they have fast surface-water delivery or high production wells."

Lenders depend a great deal on farmers' knowledge and experience when making decisions on loan applications, Carrasco said.

"We depend on our customers to help us make these decisions because experienced farmers know their business. When we drive through their fields with them, they tell us what they're planting and why. You can learn a lot more in an hour riding around with a good farmer in a pickup than you can across a desk."

Marvin Tessneer can be reached at mtessneer@lcsun-news.com.

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GROUND WATER QUALITY BUREAU SUPERFUND OVERSIGHT

Harold Runnels Building, Suite N2300
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Fax: (505) 827-2965

Fax Transmission Cover Sheet

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Fax no.: (214) 665-6660

Sender: George Schuman

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You should receive 2 page(s), including this cover sheet. If you do not receive all the page(s), please call (505) 827-2911.

Comments:

Petra: I did not include the site summary, as Don told me he is putting some handouts together. Please give me a call when you get this so I can fill you in on my conversation w/ Don.

George

6/22/01 L.C. Sun News

EDITORIAL

Call public meeting on contaminated site

Enough public concern has been raised by the announcement of a Superfund site to clean up groundwater contamination in east Las Cruces that more direct information procedures would be advisable.

The best way to answer the questions of upset residents of the area involved would be to schedule a public meeting at which representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New Mexico Environment Department and the City of Las Cruces water resources department would be available to provide facts and figures and to answer questions from residents.

Last Friday, the EPA announced that groundwater in the Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street area has become contaminated with perchloroethylene, or PCE. That is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal.

Since the exact source of local well contamination is unknown, federal Superfund money has been approved to help pay for the investigation and clean-up. A number of callers to the Sun-News have speculated on the source of the contamination, and their input and historical knowledge of property uses in the area could be very valuable to investigators. They also could share this information should a public meeting be called.

Since the announcement of the

site's qualification for Superfund money, city officials have done a good job in getting out the word that water in the affected area is safe to drink. They also have announced that sampling of wells at the site has been accelerated from yearly to quarterly, which is another good move to help soothe public confidence.

Still, the idea that PCE is in the groundwater is scary. More reassurances need to be made to residents in the area so they know they and their families and pets are safe in drinking the water. A face-to-face meeting of residents and experts would certainly help.

Petra Sanchez, the EPA's remedial project manager for the Griggs/Walnut site, said the federal government became involved because PCE is a suspected carcinogen. She added that the spread of contamination was determined "to be fairly large."

Sanchez has visited the site and says people should not be afraid to drink tap water.

However, if the government officials would come to a public meeting bearing maps and charts and an explanation of the standards used in the scientific study of the site, that could go a long way toward answering the many questions that residents of the Superfund area must still have.

The residents should be encouraging their city representatives to set up such a public meeting — the sooner the better.

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Sun-News

Superfund site



Sun-News photo by Vladimir Chaloupka

Petra Sanchez, remedial project manager for the Environmental Protection Agency, speaks during Tuesday's Superfund Site meeting at Hermosa Heights Elementary School.

EPA gives answers

■ Agencies allay fears of Superfund site residents

By Christopher Schurtz
Sun-News

It's been a little less than a year since groundwater in a 1½-square-mile area near the intersection of Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street was declared a Superfund site by the Environmental Protection Agency.

"The reason we're here in Las Cruces has very little to do with health concerns."

— Petra Sanchez
Regional EPA representative

The mere mention of the word Superfund makes most think of the nightmarish Love Canal scenario — one of the most well-known and infamous examples of industrial conta-

mination.

But at a public meeting about the site Tuesday night at Hermosa Heights Elementary School, representatives from the EPA, the Department of

Health and the city repeatedly stressed the contamination found at the Griggs-Walnut site is nowhere near as serious as Love Canal.

"The reason we're here in Las Cruces has very little to do with health concerns. It had to do with protecting the water resource and it had to do with future generations having a source of safe drinking water," Petra Sanchez, regional EPA

See EPA, Page A-4

EPA

Continued from Page A-1
representative said.

The EPA designated the site a Superfund site in June 2001 after several city wells in the area showed high traces of the industrial solvent perchloroethylene, or PCE. One of the wells, Well 18, showed higher than allowed levels of PCE — 5 parts per billion is the limit — and was shut down in 1996.

PCE has been commonly used as a degreasing agent to clean metal parts and in dry cleaning. It is a contaminant found at half of all Superfund sites.

Sanchez, Miguel Escobedo of the Department of Health, and Patrick Young of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry all said the levels seen at the Griggs-Walnut site are very low and would not likely result in any negative health effects at this time.

City Utilities Compliance Officer Dan Santantonio also reiterated that all water coming from city wells is safe, adding water contaminated with PCE in levels higher than the EPA limit was never pumped through the city's system.

All city water is tested yearly for 100 different contaminants, many of them naturally occurring, including minerals and metals, he said. The four other wells that have shown traces of PCE are tested monthly by the New Mexico Environment Department.

Last year, the city reported its water was clean, despite the minute presence of a variety of naturally occurring contaminants. But no other industrial contaminant, other than PCE, has been found, at least in measurable levels, he said.

For those who thought the process would be closed and that the EPA would be aloof, it was hard to criticize the EPA's efforts Tuesday, in terms of their apparent willingness to discuss all concerns and answer questions.

Large posters were hung on the walls explaining almost every aspect of the Superfund process, from diagrams of monitoring wells to descriptions of site plans. All of the representatives hung

around for about an hour after the meeting was over to answer specific questions.

Several members of the Concerned Citizens Community Advisory Group, the community action committee that organized in January to monitor the EPA's work on the site, expressed satisfaction with the EPA's openness.

Committee co-chair Roger Woodle said the EPA met with the group yesterday and fielded a litany of both emotional and technical questions. Woodle, one of the members with a science background, said he found the EPA's openness reassuring and agreed that for the most part, the levels of PCE seen at the site are not very serious.

But others in the group did not seem as convinced. Mary Gallegos said she and her son have had respiratory problems that she believes are related to PCE in the water. She said water in her area is often brownish or murky.

Young and Escobedo said PCE does not cause allergic or respiratory reactions. Young also said water in communities around the country often can look or smell bad, but that in most cases such water passes EPA standards testing as being safe.

"It's important to stress the levels in question are not thought to be hazardous," Escobedo said, adding the potential risk of cancer, even in high doses of PCE, is minimal.

Escobedo said cancer is a very complex disease that could have its origins in everything from heredity to environmental factors.

But he said levels of cancer (PCE has been shown to primarily cause liver cancer in animals) and other related ailments in the Superfund site, including hepatitis, will be closely looked at to make sure there is no link.

For those concerned about possible health effects, Young said the ATSDR is mandated by Congress to conduct a public health assessment of residents living in any Superfund site. He said he expects the survey to begin in July.

The EPA's remedial investigation, which begins next week, will first focus on possible sources of contamination.

Sanchez estimated testing will take about a year and a half to complete, the result of which will be a feasibility study that gives options for how to deal with the site.

Possibilities include completely removing the PCE from the area to letting it remain and treating the water before it enters the city water system, Sanchez said. The method will be determined by all appropriate federal, state and local agencies, as well as input from the public, she said.

Depending on which path is chosen, the entire process could take between five and 10 years, by Sanchez's best estimate.

Sites to be tested first include the former city airport, two former construction company sites, the former national armory and the Doña Ana County maintenance yard.

The first round of testing begins April 15, with soil vapor testing beginning April 22. Numerous monitoring wells will be drilled at varying depths to better determine the extent of the plume to try to determine from where the PCE is originating.

As can best be determined by the city and the New Mexico Environment Department, the plume extends from Interstate 25 west to between Solano and Main Street and north from Griggs Avenue to Hadley Avenue.

Santantonio emphasized the Superfund site is actually 100 feet below the surface and that homeowners in the area have no liability for clean up, and should not fear any adverse impacts from evaporation from watering lawns or soccer fields.

PCE is highly volatile and evaporates on contact with the air. It does maintain its form in water.

Sanchez encouraged those seeking more information to contact the EPA at 1-800-533-3508 or online at ww.epa.gov or by calling the NMED at 1-800-879-3421.

L A S C R U C E S

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Sun-News

EPA update tonight on Superfund site

By Christopher Schurtz

Sun-News

Representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency will bring the public up to date on work at the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site during an open house today from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Hermosa Heights Elementary School cafeteria at 1655 E. Amador Ave.

In 2000, the EPA designated a roughly 1.5-square-mile area near the intersection of Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street as a Superfund site after the New Mexico Environment Department detected higher-than-allowed levels of the contaminant perchloroethylene in a city well.

The well, Well 18, was taken off line in 1995 and has remained so ever since.

An additional four wells have shown varying levels of PCE, with one them, Well 27, being shut down after levels reached 4.9 micrograms of PCE per liter. The EPA limit is 5 micrograms per liter.

Utilities Compliance Officer Dan Santantonio said the well was shut down as a precaution.

He said the city's water is safe and has never been found noncompliant with the Safe Drinking Water Act. No other contaminants other than PCE have been found in city wells, he said.

PCE levels in Well 27 have decreased from their peak last summer, with Feb-

ruary levels showing 2.7, Santantonio said. He said water is pumped through the well into detention ponds to keep the well working and to counter possible fluctuations of PCE toward other wells when a well is entirely removed from use.

Santantonio said while he was initially concerned about the EPA's slow pace on the site, he is happy to see the EPA focus first on finding the source of contamination, rather than essentially be diverted by feasibility and health impact studies.

For those concerned with their water quality, Santantonio said reverse osmosis filters, rather than charcoal filters, are the best way to go, due in part to the

possibility of microorganisms developing in the filters.

But he said he does not feel filters are needed, as the city's water already complies with health standards.

In addition, the EPA adopts very conservative standards concerning contaminants, and levels of PCE must be very high in order for a person to show signs of contamination.

"I just don't think anybody has had that type of exposure," Santantonio said.

The meeting is open to the public. Those seeking more information, can contact the EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov or by calling the EPA in Dallas at 1-800-533-3508.

Las Cruces notices

Happenings

Dumping allegations investigated

The City of Las Cruces will hold a news conference today to release the results of an environmental investigation into the alleged dumping of liquids by city employees on city-owned property.

The allegation was anonymously submitted to the City in the form of photographs and an unsigned letter.

The city contracted with an outside environmental and engineering firm to conduct the on-site investigation.

The news conference will be held today at 3 p.m. at the investigated site, 409 Walnut St., between Amador Avenue and Griggs Street.

For more information contact Udell Vigil, Public Information Officer at (505) 541-2200. The TTY number is (505) 541-2182.

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NEWS

Richardson announces water project funding

By Charlotte Tallman
Jul 24, 2003, 12:01

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Gov. Bill Richardson announced Wednesday that Las Cruces will receive \$1.4 million to fund projects that will expand the city's water supply.

"We've got a water crisis in New Mexico and we've got a water crisis in Southern New Mexico," Richardson said during a Las Cruces news conference. "This project will significantly improve the water system and allow for continued growth and economic development for the Las Cruces community."

The money will fund the construction of three water projects: drilling water well No. 68 on the East Mesa and the construction of pump stations for wells No. 67 and No. 46.

"The main objective has been reached here," Mayor Bill Mattiace said. "The city is really moving forward to improve the water quality."

Richardson also announced a \$2.3 million allocation for emergency improvements to the Sunland Park water system.

An emergency declaration was issued in March because the water tank and portions of the water system were failing.

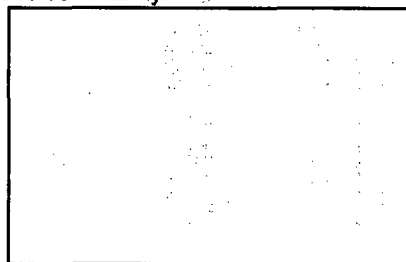
Richardson spent his day Wednesday traveling throughout the state promising safe and reliable drinking water to residents in Clovis, Portales, Artesia, Ruidoso, Alamogordo and Tularosa, as well as Las Cruces and Sunland Park.

More than \$10.5 million was allocated for water projects throughout southern and southeastern New Mexico.

"There is a true sense of urgency to these efforts," Richardson said. "We must relentlessly attack our water problems now to ensure the well-being of our citizens and our continued economic growth in the future."

Charlotte Tallman can be reached at ctallman@lcsun-news.com.

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Sun-News photo by Norm Dettlaff Gov. Bill Richardson, left, and Mayor Bill Mattiace share the "good news" Wednesday at the Las Cruces Public Schools Administration building of the allocation of \$1.4 million to improve the Las Cruces water system.

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NEWS

Packed house discusses state water plan

By T.S. Hopkins

Jul 24, 2003, 12:41

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More than 150 people squeezed into the theater at the N.M. Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Wednesday night to share their thoughts on the water dilemma in New Mexico.

The "listening outside the box" forum — one of 29 to be held statewide — was hosted by the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission. The forum was broken into five manageable segments to spur comment.

It took more than an hour to work through the topics of stewardship, balancing supply and demand and drought. Water administration and funding sources received less time.

Facilitator Kate Kopichke opened the topic of stewardship by asking the audience to imagine managing water without government.

"How would you manage water so it would last for generations?" she asked.

Responses ranged from "get rid of 75 percent of the state's population" to "get rid of grass; unless you need it for grazing move toward desert vegetation."

"Municipalities need to plan growth, not allow sprawl," was a suggestion that drew applause.

The remark was heard by State Reps. Andy Nuñez, D-Hatch, and Joe Cervantes, D-Las Cruces; City Councilor Steve Trowbridge and County Commissioners D. Kent Evans and Oscar Butler.

Water rights and priority administration are essential to deciding who gets water before others; and until individual water rights are settled in court, some feel little progress in water management can be made.

"We have to complete the adjudication process," Cervantes said before the meeting. "It will hurt some people, so they keep their head in the sand and pray for rain."

There was talk of renegotiating the Rio Grande Compact and conservation of water.

"Learning to do more with less," was how one person described water conservation.

There were new technologies discussed including desalination plants.

"New Mexico has plenty of water," one man said. "The problem is there is too much salt in it. Desalination can become a big business."

As the topic switched to supply and demand of water, the suggestion was made to thin the state's forests.

"The density of our forests — 3,000 to 5,000 trees per acre," the man said, "amounts to the trees using more than 18 acre-feet per day. The forests need to be thinned, which also helps runoff."

In each category the subject of education was mentioned — education of young people to understand the value of water.

"People moving here need to understand if they want to use water to maintain a previous lifestyle, they will pay more for it," another said.

The comments and suggestions were gathered and will be rolled into the state's first comprehensive water plan, which will be presented to the governor and a legislative water sub-committee and finally to the ISC for their approval.

Tonight the listening forum moves to Gadsden High School cafeteria in Anthony

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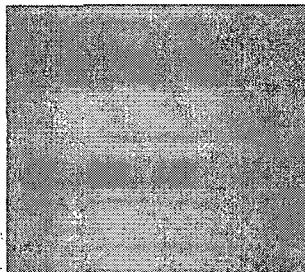
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Kate Kopischke, facilitator on contract to the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, listens to a comment during Wednesday's water forum at the New Mexico State Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum. Sun-News photo by Vladimir Chaloupka



from 7-9 p.m.

T.S. Hopkins can be reached at thopkins@lcsun-news.com.


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Las Cruces' water supply is safe, city official says Sun-News

June 16, 2001

"Las Cruces residents have nothing to fear," Gilbert Morales, Las Cruces water resources administrator said Friday. "The city's drinking water supply is safe."

Morales' issued a statement, according to a city news release, "in response to citizen concerns" about an announcement that a contaminated ground water site in the city has been added to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list.

The site of the contamination is near a city well located in the Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street area.

The contaminant is perchloroethylene, or PCE, a solvent commonly used for dry cleaning. It was discovered at the well site during routine water testing in 1995. The well was immediately taken offline and has not been used since, city officials said.

"The Superfund designation is positive for the city because it means the federal government will investigate the source of the contamination and pay to clean it up," Morales says.

Morales also says the city's water system meets all requirements under the Safe Drinking Water Act established by the federal government.

The contaminant is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal.

The source of the contamination is now known, officials said.

Sites on the federal list are eligible for federal funds if a potentially responsible party with financial resources to fund such a cleanup does not exist.

A federal official has estimated the cleanup could




cost more than \$10 million and take up to three years to complete.


For more information, residents are encouraged to call the City's Water Resources department at 528-3515, or the Public Information at (505) 541-2200/TTY 541-2182.

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Local site added to Superfund list Associated Press and staff reports

June 15, 2001

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has added a contaminated ground water site in east Las Cruces to its Superfund list of most hazardous toxic waste sites in the nation.

The agency announced it will earmark millions of federal dollars to investigate and help clean up contaminated ground water at the site, located near Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street.

The ground water is contaminated with perchloroethylene (PCE), which is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal.

The source of the contamination is not known.

George Schuman, a geologist/project manager with the New Mexico Environment Department, confirmed Thursday the site is now on the EPA's Superfund national priorities list.

Sites on the list are eligible for federal funds if a potentially responsible party with financial resources to fund such a cleanup does not exist.

Schuman said money has been made available to begin the process of remedial investigation in which an EPA contractor will take samples of water.

Schuman said he doesn't know exactly how much money the EPA will spend for the investigation and cleanup.

Petra Sanchez, an EPA official based in Dallas, was unavailable for comment on Friday.

Previously, Schuman said that cleaning up a contaminated site could cost \$10.5 million and take up to three years to complete, while an investigation could last up to two years.

"They're developing a work plan now, (which means) the installation of more ground water monitoring wells," he said Thursday.

Last year, the New Mexico Environment Department reported that low concentrations of PCE were found in several city wells located near the intersection of east Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street.

"The plume is somewhat large, a mile by a half mile," Schuman said.

One city well, known as 18, was decommissioned because it showed levels of 32 micrograms per liter, in 1995. PCE levels in that well have fluctuated since then.

Three others, wells 19, 21 and 27, also showed low levels of the chemical.

According to the EPA, there is some evidence that a lifetime of exposure to PCE, in amounts above 5 micrograms per liter, may have the potential to cause cancer.

The Las Cruces site extends from Griggs Avenue north past Hadley Avenue and from Interstate 25 east past Solano Drive.

The contamination was discovered during routine sampling of municipal wells in 1993.

The Las Cruces water system meets the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, according to state officials.

The Las Cruces site is among 10 new sites -- six in New England -- added Thursday to the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list of most hazardous toxic waste sites in the nation.

The EPA, spending as much as \$1.5 billion a year for Superfund cleanups, also proposes adding another 10 sites to the list. The public has 60 days to comment on those.

One site is a creek contaminated with PCBs in Darby Township, Pa., flowing into the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge where federal officials caution people against eating the fish.

Another is a 150-acre former hazardous waste storage site in Texas City, Texas, leaking chromium and lead into 600-mile Galveston Bay -- the seventh-largest estuary in the nation and a major commercial and recreation fishery.

Then there is the abandoned copper mine in Strafford, Vt., closed in 1958, but still pumping metals and sulfides into the Copperas Brook and West Branch of the Ompompanoosuc River.

"Every time we clean up a Superfund site, we reclaim part of our past and secure a cleaner, safer future for our children," EPA Administrator Christie Whitman said Thursday. "This is a top priority for the EPA as well as the president."

With these latest actions, announced in the Federal Register, the EPA's Superfund program has 1,236 sites and 67 proposed for agency action. The combined 1,303 includes 166 federal facilities.

Only about 15 percent of the nation's Superfund sites have been cleaned and removed from the list since it was created two decades ago.

The Superfund program's aim is to try to force polluters to pay to clean up toxic sites they either created or made worse, but critics say Superfund often relies on litigation to recover cleanup costs. And that, say industry representatives, often means ensnaring innocent business owners.

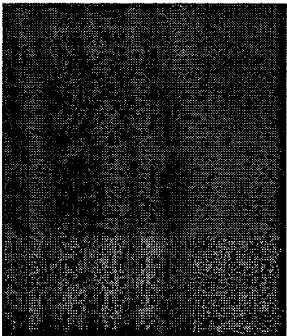
Last month, the House passed a bill to protect small businesses from big polluters trying to make them share Superfund costs. Whitman said the Bush administration supports the bill, since multiplying lawsuits have diverted resources from cleanup work.

"The less litigation we have, the more likely we finish the job of cleaning up Superfund sites," she said.

The EPA puts sites on the list based on its studies of the risks to human health and the environment from uncontrolled hazardous substances in ground and surface water, soil and air. States also have a say in deciding priorities.

In December, the Superfund program turned 20 years old. Congress passed the legislation in 1980 in the wake of the Love Canal toxic waste crisis. The Niagara Falls, N.Y., neighborhood had been built on and around a former chemical dump and by the 1960s and '70s, contaminated ground water was leaching into back yards and school grounds.

Love Canal has since become a Superfund success, with the cleanup making habitable the outer rim of the contaminated area and more than 200 homes there have been built or renovated.



The EPA is proposing 10 new Superfund sites in Casmalia, Calif.; LaSalle, Ill.; Louisville, Miss.; Central Islip, N.Y.; Hazle Township and West Hazleton, Pa.; Richland Township, Pa.; Deer Park, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; Eureka, Utah; and Vershire, Vt.

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Many residents fear Superfund label

By Karen Van Splawn
Sun-News

Sunrise Terrace Addition, located between Solano Drive and Walnut Street, is the kind of subdivision where children gleefully play in their well-maintained front yards.

People sit outside to enjoy a night's summer breeze and offer friendly greetings to someone walking past.

Attractive homes are solidly constructed of weathered brick and colored in comforting pastels. Many feature shady trees.

"It's a nice little neighborhood," said Vivian Hawn, who lives on Lupton Place. "There are a lot of children around here. Almost everyone is a homeowner."

Sunrise Terrace also is located in an area known as the Superfund site.

On June 14, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that, because of levels of perchloroethylene, or PCE, found in several city well sites, Las Cruces would receive Superfund money for investigation and cleanup.

One well, known as No. 18, was shut down in 1995 because it showed levels above 5 micrograms per liter. Since then, at least three other wells have registered traces of PCE.

PCE is mostly used to remove grease from metal and for dry cleaning.

According to the EPA, it is also a suspected carcinogen that --if consumed in levels above 5 micrograms per liter -- can also cause liver damage.

The city of Las Cruces and state Environment

Department officials insist that tap water is safe to drink, because levels of PCE found in several wells are below 5 micrograms per liter.

On June 28, dozens of people showed up for a hearing in Las Cruces and learned that it could take up to 30 years to clean up the contaminated groundwater area.

Sunrise Terrace is technically above a Superfund site, because contamination is located 200 feet below, said Dan Santantonio, regulatory compliance officer for the Las Cruces Utilities Department.

"There's no contamination of their property," he said. "Of course, there's 'guilt by association,' and they can't separate themselves, in a geographic sense."

The Sun-News recently spoke with residents living in Sunrise Terrace Addition to find out how they feel about the designation.

'Such a shock'

Robert and Vivian Hawn, both more than 50 years old, moved into their two-story home six years ago because of the school district -- for their son, now in college -- and within walking distance to shops.

"If I were coming here and buying a home (and heard) that this was a Superfund site, I'd buy in Las Colinas," said Robert Hawn, an engineering consultant, seated in their airy living room.

Vivian Hawn believes it will take forever to find out exactly what is responsible for polluting the water.

The Hawns learned about the Superfund designation only recently.

"It was such a shock," said Vivian Hawn, a benefits clerk for Las Cruces Public Schools. "There was no letter from the city. We had no warning. We checked with our neighbors, and the ones we knew were shocked."

The Hawns are not worried about the tap water, although they mostly drink bottled water and had done so before learning anything about the Superfund designation.

What they are more bothered about is property values.

"Nobody's going to get top dollar," Mrs. Hawn said. "That's why we're upset."

She is concerned that the Superfund designation may turn it into a neighborhood of rentals.

"Everybody in town is affected in the same way, because (drinking water) is mixed," said Robert Hawn, who added that from what he understands, the contamination area is quite small.

Santantonio said that, depending upon demand, city water will move in different directions. He added that the dilution and blending of water from other wells tend to lower the PCE amounts, but people should not be concerned about that, because levels are below the maximum contaminant level.

"They need to explain it's the whole city that's affected," Robert Hawn said. "It's not a surface problem, and that it will be cleaned up. It's not a real catastrophic situation."

Superfund stigma

Over on MacLeod Road, Katie Wright sat outside with her boyfriend. They have lived in the house since 1994 and saved for five years to build their earthen-colored place.

Wright, a 42-year-old retail saleswoman, wondered how bad the contamination really is.

"How much is dangerous?" she asked. "I still use water for cooking. I've lived here for 32 years and I don't like the taste of city water."

The boyfriend, who asked not to be identified, said the dogs drink water from the tap and they use it to grow vegetables in their backyard.

Wright said the EPA's claim that it could take up to 30 years to clean up contamination amazed her.

"I'll be 72 by that time," she said.

Thirty-two-year-old Joseph Benavidez, who also lives on MacLeod, said he is not afraid to drink the water that comes out of his faucet.

"I'm healthy, my family is healthy," said Benavidez, an account manager, who was out shooting some hoops with his son, 4-year-old Jordan. "I've been living here six years, and this was the first I'd ever heard anything about (the Superfund designation)."

His wife Marylu is three months pregnant and sticks to bottled water, as a precautionary measure, because she does not know how drinking tap water could affect her unborn child.

Joseph Benavidez said the stigma that comes with living in a Superfund area bothers him.

"It's like a black cloud over our neighborhood," he said.
"But it doesn't scare me."

The couple wants to sell their peach-colored stucco home and are building a bigger place out in the county.

Marylú Benavidez, a 27-year-old accountant for Families & Youth, Inc., is concerned how potential buyers may react.

"Ever since all this came about, our home showings have decreased," she said.

Her husband added, "We hope people don't think that just because this area's contaminated, it means you can't live here."

He, too, wants to see any contamination removed "so other people don't have to worry about it."

Scott Pirtle, a veterinarian who lives with his wife Heidi and their children in a stately brick home on Lupton Place, is philosophical about what the designation means.

"It's not a good situation, but it was inevitable," said Pirtle, who cited pollution problems in the United States today "Hey, I just figure that's life."

The Pirtles use bottled water.

"My wife prefers it," Pirtle said.

"It doesn't sound like there are significant health dangers," said Pirtle, a 40-year-old Las Cruces native who still remembers when tumbleweeds rolled across El Paseo Road.

"It hasn't changed anything we're doing. Let's see what they're finding out in a decade about the water supply. We'll see if Superfund designation will affect property values."

Pirtle said he appreciates that there is a federal help available to help clean up, "but it sounds like a long and drawn-out process."

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EPA to update public on Superfund Sun-News

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will hold its second open Wednesday to update the public about the status of the Las Cruces Superfund site.

The meeting will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the cafeteria of Sierra Middle School, 1700 E. Spruce Ave.

The EPA will explain the Superfund process and how it will investigate the contaminants that are affecting ground water in the Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street area. The agency will also provide information about the clean-up process.

Computer users can link to the EPA web site for additional information about the Griggs/Walnut Superfund area by accessing the City of Las Cruces web site at www.las-cruces.org.

For more information, residents can contact the City of Las Cruces Public Information Office at (505) 541-2200 / TTY (505) 541-2182.

Recently, the second of two Las Cruces city wells was shut down after New Mexico Environment Department inspectors found higher levels of the contaminant PCE in water from the well.

The well, Well 27, is one of four wells located in the Walnut and Griggs Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site that have shown traces of the contaminant perchloroethylene, or PCE.

But those traces of PCE in Well 27, located near the corner of Walnut Street and Griggs Avenue, approached EPA warning levels and the well was shut down.

PCE is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal. It is also believed by the EPA to cause cancer.

The first well in the Superfund site, Well 18, was shut down in 1995 after repeatedly showing high traces of

PCE, well above the FDA limit. It has remained offline since.

According to City Utilities Regulatory Compliance Officer Dan Santantonio, Well 27 was found to have 4.9 micrograms per liter of PCE.

The measurement is just .1 micrograms below the EPA limit of 5 micrograms per liter. According to the agency, PCE in levels over 5 micrograms per liter can cause liver damage and lead to cancer.

Well 27 had been taken off line for repairs in February. When it was turned back on in June, state environmental tests showed PCE levels at 4.5 micrograms.

Santantonio said the well was shut off because it was unlikely PCE levels in the well were going to level off and were likely going to continue to increase.

Three other wells -- wells 21, 19 and 24 -- have shown varying traces of PCE, but none have shown a significant increase in PCE levels, Santantonio said.

All four wells with some degree of contamination have been tested every month by the New Mexico Environmental Department, at the city's request.

There may also be indications those living in the Superfund site may be getting a higher concentration of PCE than city residents living outside the contaminated area.

At a public meeting in June, Olga Morales, environmental specialist for the local office of the NMED, said levels as high as 3.5 micrograms per liter were detected in tests taken earlier this year of residential tap water from houses within the Superfund site.

The dilution effect of the city's water system was not as efficient as previously thought, Morales said.

City Water Resources Director Gilbert Morales said water drawn from the wells in the Superfund site is the primary source of water to those living within the site.

In most cases, water drawn during the day essentially goes directly from the well, where it is treated with small amounts of chlorine, into city water lines and on to residential taps, Morales said.

Excess water is directed into one of several city storage tanks. The tanks are also filled during the evening to help create water pressure and to provide for water to the rest of the city for the next day.

Morales said the dynamic nature of the system allows for water to be distributed to areas around the city according to demand.

The same system, however, makes tracking water drawn from a specific well problematic because water can be drawn from varying sources throughout any given day, depending on demand.

But Morales said prior to the well being shut down, it is likely that much of the water used by residents in the area of the Superfund site came from Well 27.

Well 27 is currently being flushed for several hours in the morning, with the water from the well being directed into the storm drain that runs parallel with Amador Avenue.

Otherwise, there are no plans now to turn the well back on for use in the city's water system.

Santantonio said more will be known about the extent of the contamination and possible clean up costs after the contractor hired by the EPA, the Dallas-based firm CH 2M Hill, begins work on the investigation and conducts a feasibility study.

If the contractor cannot determine the party responsible for the contamination, the agency will pick up 90 percent of the cost of the clean-up, with the city picking up the rest.

The cost is far from being determined but will likely be in the millions of dollars.

One of the next steps the city may have to take is establishing a treatment plant to treat the water that contains PCE, at an estimated cost of \$1 million, Santantonio said.

Because PCE breaks down quickly when exposed to air, Santantonio said the treatment system would include directing contaminated water into an exposed column before being run through a scrubber.

For those interested in treating water at their taps, Santantonio recommended reverse osmosis filters rather than charcoal filters, though both methods are apparently effective in eliminating PCE from the water.

He said charcoal filters can become a medium for microbes that may cause more health problems than PCE or other contaminants, especially if they are not changed regularly.

But he said the EPA levels are safe and filters are not

needed, as he said the city is steadfastly monitoring PCE levels.

The first known contamination of the city wells in the site was discovered during routine sampling of municipal wells in 1993.

One city well, Well 18, was decommissioned in 1995 because it showed levels as high as 32 micrograms of PCE per liter. The high amount found is attributable to the PCE building up in the well lines, rather than a true measure of the amount of PCE in the well, Morales said.

Four others, wells 19, 21, 24 and 27, also showed low levels of the chemical, though Well 27 levels were the highest of the four.

The contaminated plume extends in the general range from Griggs Avenue north past Hadley Avenue and from Interstate 25 east past Solano Drive.

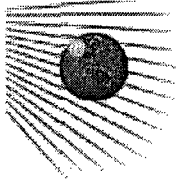
But the actual area of the plume cannot be determined until a more detailed analysis is conducted, Santantonio said.

What is known, Santantonio said, is the actual contamination is 100 to 200 feet from the surface and only poses a health threat if drawn into city water.

The area of the plume is also continuing to spread as the chemical, which is heavier than water, follows a path of least resistance through gaps of sand and clay.

Santantonio said as water usage and pumping from the wells peaked during the summer months, a sort of vacuum effect pulled at the chemical plume, further affecting the direction of its flow.

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Cynthia Fanning

11/19/2003 01:19 PM

To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donald

Williams/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc: David Bary/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Stephen

Tzhone/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Virginia

Haithcock/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

Subject: EPA closes in on pollution source

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News

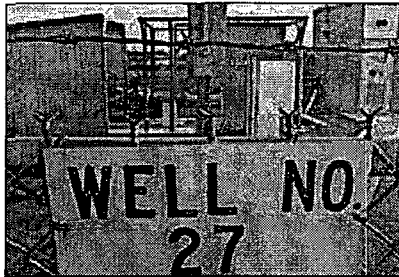
EPA closes in on pollution source

By Christopher Schurtz

Nov 17, 2003, 11:16 pm

The Environmental Protection Agency has narrowed its list of possible sources of contamination in the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site in Las Cruces.

Two city wells in the site were shut down in 1995 and 2001 after showing high traces of perchloroethylene, PCE, a solvent used to remove grease from metal and in dry cleaning.



Well No. 27 is seen at the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site Monday. Sun-News photo by Vladimir Chaloupka

Three other wells have shown traces of the contaminant, but are still in operation, because levels are not high enough to close them down.

In very high doses, PCE is believed by the EPA possibly to cause cancer, as well as liver damage and birth defects.

But EPA officials have said those levels would have to far exceed the levels found at the site, adding that a person would have to drink two liters a day above the limit for 70 years to see the harmful effects.

The affected area is centralized in groundwater and soil near Griggs Avenue and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet below the surface.

The plume extends from Interstate 25 westward roughly between Hadley and Griggs avenues to Solano Drive.

The EPA report, released to the Sun-News on Monday, identifies areas previously named as possible sources of the contamination.

The agency believes the contamination may have occurred before the early 1980s at:

- the National Guard Armory, formerly located near the corner of Solano Drive and Hadley Avenue, currently the PAL Boxing Club;
- the site of the old city-owned Crawford Municipal Airport, just east of the National Guard Armory site;
- the current site of the city fleet maintenance yard;
- the Doña Ana County Transportation Department maintenance yard on Griggs Avenue just

west of Walnut.

The EPA also says contamination could have occurred over the course of many years from illegal dumping in a former arroyo, part of which is now used for storm drainage, between East Hadley and East Griggs avenues.

Eleven sites to the west around Main Street, current or former dry cleaning operations, were also tested, and of those, 10 may warrant more investigation.

But the EPA report says it is unlikely any of these sites were the source, due to their location and extent of PCE found there.

Several former construction sites near the Griggs-Walnut area were also tested, but were eliminated as likely sources.

The EPA report stresses the site presents no health risks.

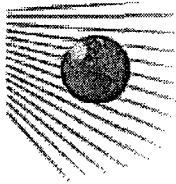
The next step will be an EPA feasibility study to determine whether to clean up the site, agency spokesman Dave Bary said Monday.

Bary said the study could take as long as a year. To date, the EPA has spent \$1.2 million on the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site, Bary said.

Christopher Schurtz can be reached at cschurtz@lcsun-news.com.

Note: This news article is intended to provide staff of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with noteworthy media coverage directly related to the agency's work. The article may include mention of EPA, staff quotes or topics that are of scientific or environmental interest to the agency. The content is taken directly from online news media sources and is presented as published. As such, the article does not necessarily reflect the views of the management or staff of EPA and may contain inaccuracies.

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Cynthia Fanning

11/19/2003 01:11 PM

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Subject: EPA narrows search for Las Cruces pollution source

<http://kobtv.com/index.cfm?viewer=storyviewer&id=6302&cat=NMTOPSTORIES>

KOB-TV, Channel 4, Albuquerque, NM

EPA narrows search for Las Cruces pollution source

Last Update: 11/18/2003 10:53:46 AM
By: Associated Press

(Las Cruces-AP) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has shortened its list of possible sources of pollution at a Las Cruces Superfund site.

The contamination forced the closure of two water wells in 1995 and 2001.

They were closed after tests found high traces of PCE (perchloroethylene) -- a chlorinated solvent used in dry cleaning or to remove grease.

Three other wells have shown traces of PCE, but they're still in operation because the levels are not high enough to close them down.

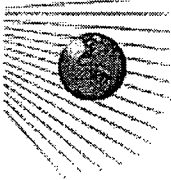
PCE is suspected of causing cancer, liver damage and birth defects in high doses.

The contamination affects groundwater and soil near a site and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet below the surface.

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11/19/2003 11:38 AM

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Subject: EPA Narrows Search for Las Cruces Water Pollution Source

<http://www.santafenewmexican.com/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=7&ArticleID=35811>

Santa Fe New Mexican

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

EPA Narrows Search for Las Cruces Water Pollution Source

LAS CRUCES, N.M. - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has shortened its list of possible sources of pollution at a Las Cruces Superfund site that forced the closure of two city wells.

The wells were shut down in 1995 and 2001 after tests found high traces of perchloroethylene, PCE, a chlorinated solvent used in dry cleaning or to remove grease. Three other wells have shown traces of PCE but are still in operation because the levels are not high enough to close them down.

PCE is suspected of causing cancer, liver damage and birth defects in high doses.

The contamination affects groundwater and soil near a site and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet below the surface.

The EPA, in a report made public Monday, said the contamination occurred no later than the early 1980s at a former National Guard Armory; the old city-owned airport east of the armory; the city fleet maintenance yard; Dona Ana County's transportation department maintenance yard; or illegal dumping in an old arroyo, part of which is now used for storm drainage.

Eleven other sites also were tested, and 10 might warrant further investigation, the EPA said. However, the report said it's unlikely any of those sites were the source.

The next step will to determine whether to clean up the site, leave it or treat the contaminated water, EPA spokesman Dave Bary said. Bary said the study could take up to a year.

The EPA will continue to try to identify the actual pollution source, he said.

To date, the EPA has spent \$1.2 million on the site, Bary said.

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AS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

Year, No. 290

Southern New Mexico's Newspaper

Jan. 15, 2003 ■ 50 Cen

RESULTS OF THE JANU
GRIGGS AND WALN



SUN-NEWS PHOTO BY NORM DETTLAFF

Petra Sanchez, the remedial project manager for the Environmental Protection Agency, left, answers questions that Eric Apodaca asked about the Griggs & Walnut Superfund Site.

Feds discuss Superfund site

By T.S. Hopkins
SUN-NEWS REPORTER

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry answered questions about the Griggs & Walnut Superfund Site during an open house Tuesday.

"Keep in mind, this is not a toxic site," Petra Sanchez, Remedial Project Manager with EPA

noted. "One would see toxic materials at a landfill, for example. There is no eminent threat to public health or drinking water."

Perhaps some of the confusion over this contaminated site is comes from the ATSDR's name; however they are not a regulatory agency, their concerns are public health assessments.

See Superfund, page 10A

Superfund

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

"We sometimes lag behind in assessing," Robert Knowles said. "We evaluate health concerns after seeing the city and county information. It showed elevated levels of contamination, but we do our own assessment."

Knowles is an Environmental Health Scientist with ATSDR. He was on hand at Hermosa Heights Elementary School Tuesday evening to listen to those who feel they might be experiencing a health problem, possibly related to the site.

Perchloroethylene, referred in shorthand as PCE, is a common solvent used in many types of industry to clean equipment and in the dry cleaning business.

"We began monitoring eight wells on Earth Day (June 20) last year," Sanchez explained. "We monitor water once a month to ensure levels never reach MCL (maximum contamination level)."

The health risk measured on that scale begins at 5 micrograms, a level never experienced at the Superfund site in Las Cruces.

"If a person drank water containing 5 micrograms of PCE for 70 years, that person has a one-in-1 million chance of contracting cancer," Sanchez noted.

Sanchez has a chart called The Superfund Process, which explains where the EPA is in the process of clearing the site from the list.

"At the office we call the chart the Stations of the Cross," Sanchez joked. "At the moment we are in the middle of the remedial investigation."

The chart lists that point as a two-part investigation. The first part identifies the contamination and site-related threats to the environment and public health. The second part of the investigation is a feasibility study that will evaluate various approaches to addressing the site conditions.

Sanchez expects to have the first portion of the investigation completed by spring.

"As we speak," Sanchez said, "information is being collated and examined."

Locating the source of contamination and noting its spreading plume of contamination — it one exists — will follow.

"We will also be trying to identify partners to assist in a clean up," Sanchez said.

"Partners would be those who are responsible for the contamination to the groundwater," Sanchez said.

There is no statute of limitations on identifying partners and ensuring their assistance.

This is the first public health assessment being done by ATSDR, and Knowles was not sure what concerns he might hear at the open house.

Unlike EPA, which has regulatory powers, ATSDR does not.

"The government is focusing on this site closely, because this is the only source of ground water here," Knowles mentioned. "If the contamination were to spread it could be a big problem."

Those who were unable to attend the Tuesday evening open house, but have questions about the Griggs & Walnut Superfund site, may contact Sanchez toll free at 1-800-533-3508 or visit the Web site at www.epa.gov/region6/superfund



**Griggs & Walnut Avenue
Groundwater Plume Superfund Site
U.S. EPA Region 6 Plans Tap Water Sampling Effort
Week of January 27, 2003**



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 will be sampling residential water from selected Las Cruces-area homes beginning the week of January 27, 2003. Water samples will be tested for perchloroethylene (PCE) and associated compounds.

Ten samples will be collected from selected taps within the distribution area in the vicinity of the City of Las Cruces Well 19 and the Upper Griggs reservoir, which receives water from City of Las Cruces Well No. 21. Sampling staff will not enter homes to perform this activity, but will collect samples from outside spigots or publically available taps. At those homes selected, EPA will be asking homeowners to document permission for access to their outside spigots through an access agreement form. The EPA will provide individual homeowners with the results of the sample analysis from their taps.

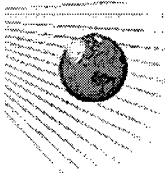
If you would like to volunteer to have your tap sampled, please contact EPA no later than January 22nd to coordinate the sampling activity.

Petra Sanchez
Remedial Project Manager
U.S. EPA Region 6
1-800-533-3508 (toll-free)

Dan Hochstetler
Community Outreach Coordinator
U.S. EPA Region 6
1-800-533-3508 (toll-free)

Dana Bahar
Project Manager
New Mexico Environment Department
505-827-2908

If you would like to be added to the site mailing list or have questions about any activities associated with the Griggs and Walnut Avenue Groundwater Plume site, please call 1-800-533-3508 (toll-free). Mailing list information may be shared with local, state, and other federal agencies, members of the public and potentially responsible parties.



Cynthia Fanning
10/20/2004 05:58 PM

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Stephen Tzhone/R6/USEPA/US@EPA
Subject: News - City & county to pay for cleanup (Las Cruces Sun-News)

<http://www.lcsun-news.com/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi?archive=482&num=10028>

From Las Cruces Sun-News

News

City, county to pay for cleanup

By Christopher Schurtz

Oct 16, 2004, 07:30 am

The city and county will be responsible for what may be millions of dollars in costs to clean up the Griggs-Walnut Ground Water Plume Superfund site in east-central Las Cruces.

The Environmental Protection Agency notified the city and county Thursday that they were "the probable responsible parties" because they own the property where the EPA believes the initial contamination occurred decades ago.

That means the city and county will have to pay between \$200,000 and \$800,000 to either have the EPA finish the next phase of study, or to do a study themselves. They have 60 days from Oct. 27 to let the EPA know what they want to do.

The city, which received the notice from the EPA Thursday, put out a news release Friday afternoon. EPA officials could not be reached for comment.

The actual cost and method of cleanup will be determined as part of the next phase of study, but Utilities Director Jorge Garcia said Friday he expects it to be "in the millions of dollars over the next 10 to 20 years."

Garcia said the city will continue its ongoing talks with the county to determine how to break up the costs for the study.

But he said it's likely the city and county will have to split the costs and spend several hundreds of thousand of dollars by next summer on the remedial and feasibility studies required by the EPA.

Two city water wells on the site were shut down in 1995 and 2001 after showing high traces of perchloroethylene, or PCE, a chlorinated solvent used in industrial applications to remove grease from metal or in dry cleaning.

Three other wells have shown traces of PCE, but are still in operation. The EPA put the site on its list of superfund sites in 2001.

In very high doses, PCE is believed to possibly cause cancer, liver damage and birth defects.

But the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has determined there is no significant health risk at the site because levels of PCE aren't currently high enough.

Nevertheless, the site, which extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet below the

surface from Interstate 25 going west between Hadley and Griggs avenues to North Solano Drive, needs to be cleaned up to protect the city's future water supply.

The EPA finished a yearlong study last November and determined the "hot spots" from which the PCE was emanating.

Those spots were on land the city and county have owned for decades. It's not yet known, but it's believed the contamination occurred before the early 1980s.

The hot spots identified are:

- the city-owned National Guard Armory property, located near the corner of Solano Drive and Hadley Avenue, currently the PAL Boxing Club;
- the former site of the old city-owned Crawford Municipal Airport, just east of the National Guard Armory site, the runway for which was located about where Hadley Drive, off Walnut, is now;
- the current site of the city fleet maintenance yard, located near the site of the old Crawford Airport;
- the Doña Ana County Transportation Department maintenance yard on Griggs Avenue, just west of Walnut.

Eleven sites to the west around Main Street where dry cleaners currently are or were in the past were also tested, and of those, 10 may "warrant further investigation on an individual basis."

But the EPA report says it is unlikely any of these sites were the source, due to their location and amount of PCE found there.

Several former construction sites near the Griggs-Walnut area were also tested, but were eliminated by the EPA as likely sources.

The EPA said this week it is not saying the city and county caused the contamination, but because they have owned the property during the time period the contamination may have occurred, they're responsible for cleaning it up.

The EPA said it's reserving the right to ask the city and county to pay the more than \$3.8 million in costs the agency has incurred since 2001, saying "while we are not looking for a settlement regarding EPA's cost of recovery claim at this point, we may do so in the future."

Since May, EPA officials have been meeting with city and county officials in closed meetings, where it became clear the EPA would be looking at the city and county as the responsible parties. No one within either entity would comment to the Sun-News about the meetings.

Christopher Schurtz can be reached at cschurtz@lcsun-news.com

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*Cynthia Fanning
Public Information Officer
U.S. EPA Region 6*

The city and county have already agreed to work with the EPA on the rest of the study, which could be complete by next summer.

"I don't think there's a whole lot of controversy over what needs to be done," Santantonio said.

The city also will use its existing hydrology consultant Schumaker Associates to do studies to better understand the flow of the water plume, and has committed \$1.2 million in its most recent budget for the Superfund site.

Santantonio said the city and county may know by next summer what will happen next, in terms of treatment.

That could be done in a variety of ways < some cheap, others expensive < but it's likely the affected wells would be used in conjunction with a treatment facility.

The EPA said it's reserving its right to ask the city and county to pay the more than \$3.8 million in costs it's incurred since 2001, saying "while we are not looking for a settlement regarding EPA's cost of recovery claim at this point, we may do so in the future."

Christopher Schurtz can be reached at cschurtz@lcsun-news.com

If you go

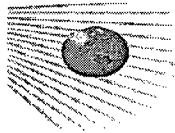
What: EPA Griggs-Walnut Superfund site update

When: 5:30-8 p.m. tonight

Where: Sierra Middle School, 1700 E. Spruce St.

Note: This news article is intended to provide staff of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with noteworthy media coverage directly related to the agency's work. The article may include mention of EPA, staff quotes or topics that are of scientific or environmental interest to the agency. The content is taken directly from online news media sources and is presented as published. As such, the article does not necessarily reflect the views of the management or staff of EPA and may contain inaccuracies.

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07/22/2005 01:34 PM

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Subject: News - EPA to update Superfund status (Las Cruces Sun-News)

A; A Section

EPA to update Superfund status

Christopher Schurtz

Las Cruces Sun-News

457 words

21 July 2005

The Las Cruces Sun-News

5A

English

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Sun-News reporter

Officials with the Environmental Protection Agency will be in Las Cruces tonight to update residents on the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site.

The city shut down a city well in 1995 and one in 2001 after they showed high traces of perchloroethylene, or PCE, an industrial solvent used to remove grease from metal or in dry cleaning.

In very high doses, PCE is believed by the EPA to possibly cause cancer, as well as liver damage and birth defects.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry has determined contaminant levels are not high enough to pose a health risk to residents here.

The affected area is centralized in groundwater wells and soil near Griggs and Walnut avenues, and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet underground.

The plume extends from Interstate 25 and goes west roughly between Hadley and Griggs avenues to North Solano Drive.

Because the city and county own the properties where the contamination is believed to have emanated from at some point more than 30 years ago, under EPA regulations they are jointly responsible for paying for the rest of the study and cleanup.

City Regulatory Compliance officer Dan Santantonio said the meeting tonight "is really going to be a matter of bringing people up to date about what's happened so far."

In cooperation with the City of Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, and the New Mexico Environment Department, the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in the process of completing its Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) of the Griggs and Walnut Ground Water Plume Superfund Site.

The RI/FS will use data gathered to-date by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and EPA during initial site investigation activities and the Source Investigation described by the Identification of PCE Release Areas Report dated November 2003. This report is available in the site information repository located at the Branigan Library. To complete our understanding of the contamination so that remedial alternatives can be evaluated, additional data is needed from the shallow soil vapor in potential exposure areas (in residential yards and around recreational facilities) and from the ground water in areas not previously sampled.

This work will involve the following:

Two new ground water wells will be drilled to complete the definition of ground water contamination. One east of I-25 along the flood control dam, and one south of Griggs and west of Walnut, along either Willow or Cottonwood.

One new soil vapor monitor point will be drilled between the ground surface and the water table in area of the County yard north of Griggs (west of Walnut) to help evaluate the relation between observed soil vapor contamination and ground water contamination.

The drilling will start the week of October 17th and will continue through about November 18th.

Once the wells are installed, ground water samples will be collected from all new and existing wells at the site. This work will start the week of November 28th, and will continue through about December 9th.

Also, as a precautionary measure, shallow soil vapor data will be collected using a hand-held sampling device in residential yards north of the Hadley/Walnut intersection, in the ground outside the Meerscheidt Recreation Center and the Police Athletic League facility. This work will start the week of November 7th, and continue through about November 16th.

Please note that the specific dates cited above are subject to change depending on weather and staff and equipment availability. Individual property owners will be notified of the specific date EPA or its contractor will be onsite.

Steve Ramsey
505 - 541 - 5452

Griggs & Walnut Superfund Site

Las Cruces, New Mexico

We have a Superfund site in our home town....in our neighborhood. It seems to have contaminated our groundwater....water we use for drinking, bathing, watering our plants. What does this mean to us? The Community Advisory Group (CAG) Formation Committee has put together this *Fact Sheet* to help you get the facts on the Griggs & Walnut Superfund Site.

- Routine sampling of drinking water is conducted by the City of Las Cruces (CLC) to ensure safe water.
- This sampling follows guidelines set by the EPA (Safe Drinking Water Act) that sets the maximum contaminant level (MCL) allowed.
- The contaminant, Perchloroethylene (PCE), is a solvent commonly used to dry clean fabrics or remove grease from metals. The source is not yet known.
- The contaminant maximum contaminant level (MCL) for PCE is 5 micrograms per liter or parts per billion (ppb)
- During 1996, PCE levels approached MCL in Well 18 (Hadley & Griggs) and the well was shut down.
- CLC notifies the New Mexico Environment Department who then conducted a preliminary assessment in 1997 by evaluating existing information.
- Preliminary Assessment findings call for further investigation, and a site inspection was conducted in two phases: Background information gathered, soil and groundwater sample collected, a soil vapor survey was conducted, and groundwater monitoring wells installed.
- Groundwater flows east from the Rio Grande towards I-25.
- PCE levels approached MCL in Well 27 (Griggs & Walnut) and the well was shut down in July.
- The contaminated area (plume) is estimated to be at least 8,000 feet long, about 2,500 feet wide, and 100 feet thick. The plume extends eastward towards I-25 and westward to Esperanza Street. The north and south boundaries are somewhere between East Griggs Avenue and East Hadley Avenue.
- Site placed on the National Priorities List in June 2001. The NPL is the EPA's list of uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for long-term cleanup under the Federal Superfund Program.
- Congress established the Superfund Program in 1980 to locate, investigate, and clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites nationwide.
- Currently, Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) is planned. Using information already available, they will document the nature and extent of the plume, its potential for migration, and potential risks to human health and the environment.
- Questions or concerns call District 3 City Councilor Dolores Archuleta at 541-2066 or email at darchuleta@las-cruces.org
- You can be a part of our Community Advisory Board. Ask us how!

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City declares drinking water safe

June 19, 2001

By Karen Van Splawn
Sun-News

Water in a Las Cruces Superfund site is safe to drink, city officials who are monitoring the site said Monday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Friday announced that groundwater in the Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street area contaminated with perchloroethylene, or PCE, qualified for Superfund money.

PCE is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal. The exact source of local well contamination is unknown, so Superfund money will help pay for investigation and clean up.

In 1995, routine sampling by the New Mexico Environment Department found PCE in one well -- No. 18, located off East Griggs Avenue between Walnut and Hermosa streets. The well had levels above the maximum allowable 5 micrograms per liter and was taken off line in 1996.

Gilbert Morales, the city's water resources administrator, said the last sample for that well showed 8 micrograms of PCE per liter.

PCE has also been found in three other wells: No. 19, near East Griggs Avenue and Triviz Drive; No. 21, at Triviz Drive and Craig Avenue; and No. 27, on East Griggs Avenue just east of Walnut Street.

"They are still operating, but we have accelerated sampling from yearly to quarterly, so we can better track the levels," Morales said. "They are under the (maximum contaminant) level."

Morales said water from those three wells is going into the system, or all the pipes connecting reservoirs to homes.

As of May 16, routine testing showed 1.4 micrograms of PCE per liter in well 19, and 3.6 micrograms per liter in well 21.

No current data was available for well 27, which was offline due to repairs, but is now back in service, Morales said.

The New Mexico Environment Department will next sample that well in July, Morales added.

Morales said that most standards are set by the EPA based on scientific studies. For PCE, that standard is 5 micrograms per liter.

Dan Santantonio, regulatory compliance analyst with the city of Las Cruces, said it is against the law to use wells that go above the maximum contaminant level of 5 micrograms of PCE per liter of water.

"People in the Griggs and Walnut site are getting water from non-affected wells," Santantonio said. "It's a very dynamic system. You can't say where any little packet of water is going to go. It depends on demand."

"We're on the front side of this curve," Santantonio added. "(Contamination is) in little spots right now, and we'd like to clean it up."

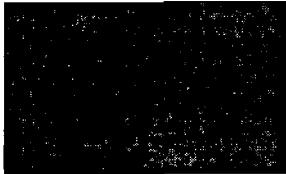
Petra Sanchez, the EPA's remedial project manager for the Griggs/Walnut site, said the federal government became involved because PCE is a suspected carcinogen. She added that the spread of contamination was determined "to be fairly large."

Sanchez, who has visited the Las Cruces site, stressed that people should not be afraid to drink tap water.

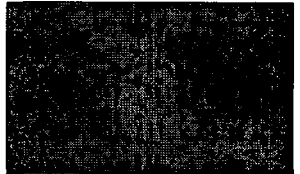
"Is there a threat right now? No," she said. "The city deals with the water supply on a day-to-day basis to make sure it's functioning properly."

The latest information may make some residents nervous, but Santantonio said a person would have to drink two liters of water -- containing more than 5 micrograms per liter of PCE -- every day for 70 years before experiencing a "specific health effect," or a serious illness.

If the exposure stays under 5 micrograms per liter for that same time period, "theoretically, you would not see an adverse health effect in more than one in a 100,000 or one in 1 million people, because



they didn't have a sufficient exposure," Santantonio said.



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EEKS TO CASH IN ON HOWARD HUGHES CONNECTION, A-4

R U C E S

News

SATURDAY

June 29, 2002

TODAY'S
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Bush to transfer power to Cheney temporarily, A-3

SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO'S NEWSPAPER

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Former dry cleaning sites tested for contamination



Sun-News photo by Lucas Herndon

Mike Jimenez, right, and Louis Trujillo, left, of the United States Geological Society are adjusting a geo-probe, a machine that drills into the ground, to take air samples from the soil to test for contaminants. The USGS will testing 11 sites through Tuesday.

By Gabriela C. Guzman
Sun-News

Specialists with the United States Geological Survey are taking gas samples from the ground around present and former dry cleanings sites in the city.

The samples will help discern how much, if any, perchloroethylene, or PCE, is in the soil.

PCE in large amounts is suspected to cause cancer, according to the Environment Protection Agency.

Dry cleaners use PCE to remove stains from clothing. In the past, used PCE was stored in barrels, which leaked into the ground. Now dry cleaners must have a permit to handle the chemical.

The team of four began drilling holes on Thursday and will continue until Tuesday. A total of 11 sites will be surveyed for PCE.

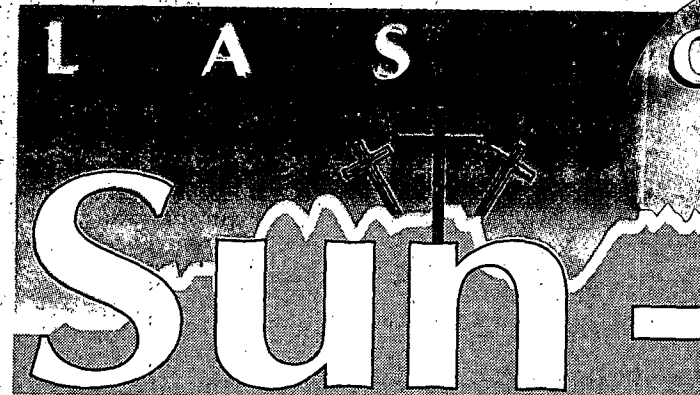
Friday afternoon the team was investigating a former dry cleaning site on Water Street and Grieggs Avenue.

Louis Trujillo, a hydrologic technician for the USGS, screws a 5-foot steel rod onto a geo-probe, or a machine that drills into the ground, and after the rod is secure he steps back and flips the switch. The drill bangs through the asphalt and then glides down once it reaches sand.

Another rod is connected to the inserted rod to get 10 feet into the ground to effectively extract gas, Roger Lee, a hydrologist with USGS's water resources division, said.

Trujillo wraps white Teflon tape around the tip of the inserted rod to seal the two rods together. The rods are sealed to ensure that the only gas extracted is coming from the bottom, Lee said.

See Testing, Page A-7



VOL. 122-NO. 90

Testing

Continued from Page A-1

A pump is connected to the rods and it sucks out the gas. The gas is pulled from ground where there is no water, but there is the possibility of PCE migrating into the water table, Lee said.

After the pumps runs for about five minutes, G.F. "Rick" Huff pushes a 2-inch needle into a gold colored screw attached to the pump and extracts the air into the syringe. Huff is a geochemistry hydrologic specialist with the water resources division of the USGS.

In the back seat of a white Ford

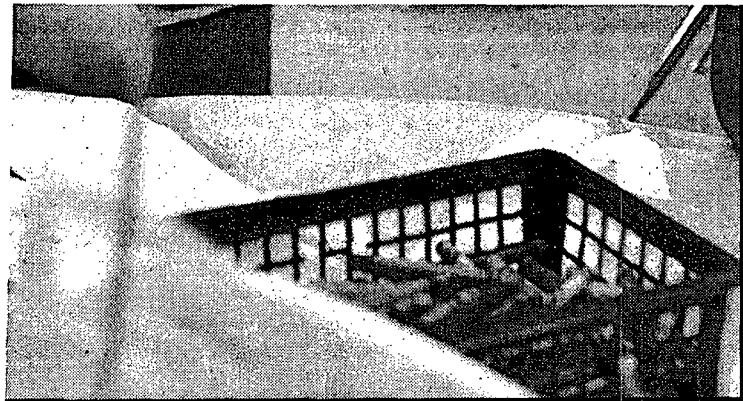
suburban is a chromatogram, or a machine that gauges the amount of contaminants in the soil.

Huff inserts the syringe of air into the machine and receipt-like paper slides out, detailing how many seconds it took the machine to detect contaminants.

Huff will take the receipts and review for PCE.

These samples are part of a report that will be released by the EPA in about month and could led to more research about PCE in the area.

"We are just sniffing around," Huff said.



Sun-News photo by Norm Dettlaff

ro ponders about how to describe in words and pictures the play
rt View Elementary School in Sunland Park. A two-person travel-
condensed version of "The Wizard of Oz" for the school's students.

school Tuesday, but drove onto campus at 11:42 a.m. to drop another student off at school,

Galván said Ramirez has been suspended for 10 days pending a discipline hearing.

Man charged with rape

Sun-News report

A 35-year-old man was arrested after allegedly sexually assaulting a female relative Sunday.

Doña Ana County Sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Ed Miranda said Keith Lewis, of the 9500 block of Comet, was charged with criminal sexual penetration, false imprisonment and battery against a household member.

Miranda said deputies responded to a domestic disturbance at the residence. A woman said she had been sexually assaulted by Lewis.

The woman said Lewis had put a pillow over her face to muffle her screams and would not allow her to leave the residence, Miranda said.

Lewis is being held on a \$26,000 surety bond at the Doña Ana County Detention Center.

EPA begins work on local Superfund site

By Christopher Schurtz

Sun-News

Work on the Walnut-Griggs Superfund site is under way, with the Environmental Protection Agency beginning field studies this week at several locations within the Superfund site.

The EPA will begin by taking soil vapor samples from the Doña Ana County Maintenance Yard at 2025 E. Griggs Ave., one of five sites the EPA will focus on during the first wave of the remedial investigation.

Work will continue through early July, with the results being used to develop a feasibility study to determine clean-up costs and remedies.

The soil vapor study conducted this week will determine if perchloroethylene, PCE, is found in the soil vapor at a certain level of the soil called the vadose zone. PCE is highly volatile and evaporates upon contact with air, though it remains fairly solvent in soil.

If PCE is found in the vadose zone, the area in the earth's crust above permanent groundwater level, it could indicate the presence of PCE at lower levels in the groundwater aquifer.

Additional sites to be tested at this time include the former Crawford Airport near Solano and East Hadley Avenue, now the location of the city's fleet maintenance yard. Other preliminary sites include the former National Guard Armory on Hadley Street and two former construction sites close to I-25.

The week of May 13, the EPA's field team will begin drilling deep groundwater monitoring wells in the vicinity of the plume, which is believed to cover an area roughly 1.5 miles from Interstate 25 west



Sun-News photo by Norm Dettlaff

Don Chastan, left, holds the hose for Scott Pieper, who extracts a soil vapor sample from the ground at the Doña Ana County vehicle maintenance yard at Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street on Wednesday.

to between Solano and Main Street Hadley Avenue.

The actual Superfund site is

hundreds of feet below the surface. The field tests are hoped to better determine the extent of the contamination.

The EPA designated the site a Superfund site in June 2001 after several city wells in the area showed high traces of the industrial solvent PCE.

Well 18, located near the intersection of Walnut and Griggs, showed higher-than-allowed levels of PCE — five parts per billion is the limit — and was shut down in 1996. A total of five city wells have since shown varying traces of PCE, though none other than Well 18 showed traces higher than the EPA's limit. Another well was shut down last year after it continued to show increased traces of PCE and approached the limit.

PCE is a chlorinated solvent and has commonly been used as a degreasing agent to clean metal parts and in dry cleaning, among other uses. It is a contaminant found at half of all Superfund sites.

PCE is believed by the EPA to possibly cause cancer in levels of five micrograms per liter, as well as liver damage and birth defects in very high doses.

The Department of Health, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and the EPA have all said the levels seen at the Griggs-Walnut site are very low and would not likely result in any negative health effects at this time.

The city and the New Mexico Environment Department have also maintained all water coming from city wells is safe, adding water contaminated with PCE in levels higher than the EPA limit was never pumped through the city's system.



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Wednesday, January 01, 2003 - 11:57:41 PM MST

EPA report delayed by added sampling

By Gabriela C. Guzman

Sun-News Reporter

Increased sampling of the groundwater to determine the source of contamination in the Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street Superfund site will push the final report into 2003.

Originally, the Environmental Protection Agency planned to have a final report completed in November. But because of further sampling of the groundwater in the area, the report is now expected to be completed sometime before spring, according to Petra Sanchez, a regional EPA representative.

Attention was drawn to the area after high levels of the industrial solvent perchloroethylene, or PCE, was found in city wells.

The Superfund site, a 1.5-square-mile area near the intersection of Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street, was declared in June 2001. The actual Superfund site begins about 100 feet below the ground.

Work on the Superfund site began in May. Since then, some 800 soil vapor samples and more than 100 groundwater samples have been taken to determine the source of the contamination.

The water samples were taken at various ground levels during different times in the day to discover the source of the groundwater contamination.

Sanchez said the groundwater sampling delayed the investigation, since it began later than intended. Also, drilling the holes at various lengths took more time, she said.

"We are hoping to get a vertical perspective of where the containment is coming from," Sanchez said, in a telephone interview.

The drilling lengths ranged down to 705 feet below the ground.

Eight boreholes -- ranging from 492 to about 700 feet below ground surface -- were also drilled to collect water at different depths. These boreholes are now used as permanent monitors of the water after a 6-inch diameter steel casing was installed in each.

Also since May, soil vapor samples were taken at various ground levels to determine at what depth the contamination is entering the groundwater. Samples were taken at National Guard Armory property at Solano Drive, the city fleet maintenance yard and in the neighborhood northeast of the Hadley Avenue/Walnut Street intersection. High traces of PCE were found in some wells in the area. One, Well 18, showed higher-than-allowed levels of PCE -- 5 parts per billion is the limit -- and was shut down in 1996.

The EPA believes PCE exposure can possibly cause cancer in levels of five micrograms per liter, as well as liver damage and birth defects in very high doses.

In the past, city, department of health and EPA officials have said the levels of PCE found have not been to the extent that could lead to negative health effects.

Sanchez reiterated the main concern for with the Superfund site is preventing future water supply contamination and that there is not an immediate health risk.

The final report will include information from the New Mexico Environment Department and the city of Las Cruces.

Gabriela C. Guzman may be reached at gguzman@lcsun-news.com.

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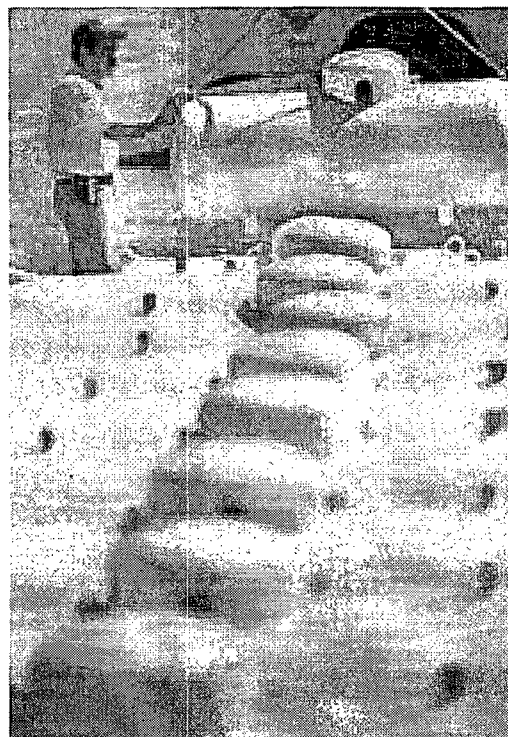
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Article Last Updated: Friday, March 14, 2003 - 12:24:11 AM MST



Rising propane
Sun-News photo by Norm Dettlaff
Griffin's Propane Manager Arnold Lopez lifts
a 120-gallon propane tank onto a truck,
preparing to deliver it to a customer on
Thursday.

Storage Yard began when City Councilor Ken Miyagishima received an anonymous complaint in January, complete with pictures showing what appeared to be city workers dumping liquids at the dirt lot sometime around October of 2001.

Though the four-acre lot is within the EPA Superfund site, the alleged dumping has no connection with the contaminant being investigated there by the EPA -- the industrial degreasing agent called petrachloroethene or PCE.

No trace of PCE was found on the Walnut Storage Yard site. The EPA believes the PCE contamination in the Superfund site likely occurred more than 20 years ago. That investigation is ongoing.

At a news conference at the site Thursday afternoon, City Manager Jim

Dumping probe gives all clear to city-owned lot

By Christopher Schurtz

Sun-News
 reporter

A city-owned dirt lot within the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site has been cleared of containing possible contaminants after an anonymous complaint early this year triggered an environmental investigation at the site.

The investigation into the Walnut

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Ericson said the city takes seriously the types of allegations contained in the anonymous complaint.

He said that to answer any lingering questions, the city hired the Las Cruces office of the environmental firm Terracon, at a cost of \$4,947, to conduct subsurface soil tests throughout the lot.

Terracon tested for 68 different compounds, as well as the types of pesticides and herbicides used by the city. They completed the work in February.

Only one sample detected anything at all -- trace amounts of trimethylbenzene, a chemical found commonly in gasoline, paint thinners and asphalt.

TMB is not a regulated substance and is harmful only in very large doses, potentially causing headaches, fatigue and drowsiness.

According to Mary Wells of Terracon, the amounts detected at the site were far below levels that could be harmful.

Utilities Director Jorge Garcia said the site has been investigated at least six different times in the last four years by the city, the New Mexico Environmental Department and last summer, by the EPA.

Garcia said those investigations resulted from similar complaints two years ago to the EPA, apparently from persons claiming to be city employees. Testing also occurred after three underground fuel tanks were removed from the site in 1999.

The city has incurred about \$12,000 in costs related to the various investigations of the Walnut Storage Yard, Garcia said.

In the case investigated by Terracon, pictures appear to show a city vacuum truck dumping fluid at the site.

Ericson acknowledged city workers were dumping liquid on the site, but said it was merely rainwater drawn from puddles or rain runoff, for which a vacuum truck is commonly used.

The site is usually used for training on backhoes and other city machinery, Ericson said, and is not generally used for dumping. He said the city has designated areas mandated by the EPA to dump liquids, and he said the workers likely dumped the water at the site because of the "convenience."

No employees or their supervisors have been disciplined, Ericson said, because he doesn't think "any of the employees did anything wrong."

Instead, Ericson said the person who brought forward the allegations in an anonymous complaint was "someone with another agenda trying to embarrass the employees" and "an opportunity for someone with a grudge or to make something that was happening appear it was something it was not."

Based on the results of the recent comprehensive testing, Garcia said, the site is now all clear.

"My recommendation is I think we've done enough. I'm recommending no additional samples are needed," Garcia said. "We've done plenty of testing. We feel the site is clean and safe."

Christopher Schurtz can be reached at cschurtz@lcsun-news.com.

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Las Cruces Sun~News Online

New arsenic standards set; Las Cruces OK

November 17, 2001

By Christopher Schurtz
Sun-News

A recent ruling by the Environmental Protection Agency that will reduce the allowable levels of arsenic in drinking water from 50 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion will have no effect on Las Cruces water providers.

Water Resources Director Gilbert Morales said, unlike other communities who will have to find a way to pay for the increased processing needed to comply with the standard, Las Cruces will not have to change anything in terms of arsenic levels.

According to the New Mexico Environmental Department's most recent testing of county and city water supplies, arsenic levels were observed at an average level of 4.9 parts per billion, well below the new standard.

Morales said there are some areas on the West Mesa where levels approached 5.8 parts per billion, but those were the highest levels reported in the area.

"They were going to set it at one point at five. Thankfully, reason prevailed and they set it at ten. It's still protective of the community and it won't bankrupt the city," Morales said.

Arsenic levels are higher in the more volcanic areas of New Mexico, particularly northern cities like Albuquerque, where levels are reported at 13 parts per billion.

The EPA has claimed arsenic levels as low as 3 parts per billion can cause liver and lung cancer.

But bowing to widespread pressure from states across the nation who said they could not afford higher standards, the EPA proposed the limit of 10 parts per billion, garnering support from a majority of the U.S. House of Representatives.

EPA spokesman David Bary said although science supports the new levels, opinions about the levels vary. Bary said there are those who feel the standards do not go far enough, while others feel even the old standard of 50 parts per billion was higher than it needed to be.

"It's all over the place," Bary said. He said the 10 parts per billion was essentially a compromise with the desire for safer standards and the cost-benefit of adopting levels lower than 10 parts per billion. Bary said there are 54,000 water systems in the country that provide water to 254 million users. Private wells are not subject to the new standards, Bary said.

Of the 54,000 water systems, there are 3,000 systems serving 13 million people which will have to lower their concentrations of arsenic. A majority of those systems, Bary said, are rural systems, many of which

will have a more difficult time than municipalities in lowering levels.

A bulk of those systems are in western states. According to a United State Geological Survey map, most of Arizona, much of southern California and a good part of Nevada and Nebraska have high concentrations of arsenic. High concentrations of arsenic are the result of geology, Bary said, with arsenic naturally occurring in higher concentrations in mountainous or formerly volcanic areas.

Currently, methods of arsenic removal include reverse osmosis and the use of filtration systems.

The 50 parts per billion standard for arsenic was set in 1942.

The EPA made the ruling October 31 and the standards must be met by February 2006.

Associated Press reports were used for this story.



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Las Cruces Sun~News Online

EPA to hold meeting on Superfund site tonight

November 10, 2001

**By Christopher Schurtz
Sun-News**

The Environmental Protection Agency will host a public hearing on the Walnut and Griggs Superfund site from 7 to 9 p.m. today at Hermosa Heights Elementary School, 1655 E. Amador Ave.

EPA representatives will be joined by city and state officials to discuss several contaminated city wells located in the area of Walnut Drive and Griggs Avenue.

The first city well in the area, Well 18, was shut down in 1995 after New Mexico Environmental Department inspectors discovered levels of perchloroethylene, or PCE, that were higher than what the EPA recommends.

PCE is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal.

It is also believed by the EPA to cause liver damage and lead to cancer in levels of 5.0 micrograms of PCE per liter. In 1995, Well 18 showed levels as high as 32 micrograms of PCE per liter.

The high amount found is attributable to the PCE building up in the well lines, rather than being a true measure of the amount of PCE in the well, according to the city utilities department.

This summer, a second well in the Griggs and Walnut area, Well 27, was found to have 4.9 micrograms of PCE per liter. The measurement is just .1 micrograms below the EPA limit of 5 micrograms per liter.

Well 27 had been taken offline for repairs in February. When it was turned back on in June, state environmental tests showed PCE levels at 4.5 micrograms. The well was shut off by the city as a precaution and currently remains offline.

Three other wells in the area -- wells 21, 19 and 24 -- have shown varying traces of PCE, but none have shown a significant increase in PCE levels, according to the city utilities department.

All four wells with some degree of contamination have been tested every month by the New Mexico Environmental Department, at the city's request.

But as of last week, no change in PCE levels was reported by the city.

The source of the contamination is unknown, but it is hoped the investigation by the EPA will eventually discover the likely source.

If a specific party responsible for the contamination can be determined, that party would be responsible financially for the cleanup.

But if the EPA-hired contractor working on the site, the Dallas-based firm CH 2M Hill, cannot determine the party responsible for the contamination, the EPA will pick up 90 percent of the cost of the cleanup, with the city picking up the rest.

The cost is far from being determined, but is expected to be in the millions of dollars.

Las Cruces Sun~News

Agency invites public to discuss toxic site

By T.S. Hopkins

Sunday, January 12, 2003 -

Sun-News report er

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry a division of the federal Environmental Protection Agency will offer an open house from 5 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Hermosa Heights Elementary School, 1655 E. Amador Ave.

The open-house format allows those who feel they have developed illnesses from the contamination at the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site.

It is the first step in the process of collecting information and assessing the public's concern of the site. The information gathered will assist the agency in its process of its investigation of possible exposure to contaminants at the site.

The members of the federal team will be available for private one-on-one consultation with area residents and offer an overview and update on its findings.

The Doña Ana County Environmental Services Division will also be at the open house to address an unrelated health concern.

Luis Morales, director of the county's Environmental Services Division, will distribute information of the West Nile virus.

"Every indication we have, points to a spring and summer threat of the West Nile virus," Morales said last week.

Morales's department has printed brochures detailing ways county residents can help themselves ward off the virus borne by mosquitoes.

"West Nile virus is endemic, spread by mosquitoes that contract it from birds," Morales explained. "Our materials will demonstrate to residents how they can be prepared when the mosquito season gets underway."

Morales said while the open house is strictly the "feds' show" his department is using to opportunity to piggyback their message to those who come to the Tuesday meeting.

The county 's Environmental Services Division will also present its comprehensive plan to battle West Nile virus at the February County Commission meeting.

"In the short term," Morales added. "This printed information will remind residents the mosquito season is approaching and what steps they can take to reduce chances of encountering West Nile virus."

Human illness from West Nile virus is rare, according to information from the Centers For Disease Control.

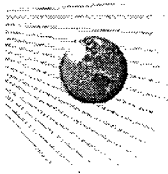
The agency indicates the chance any one person becoming ill from a mosquito bite is low, but it can infect people, horses many types of birds and some other animals.

The CDC does say though, on rare occasions, West Nile virus can result in severe and sometimes fatal illnesses to humans.

Thomas Hopkins can be reached at thopkins@lcsun-news.com

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Cynthia Fanning

11/19/2003 01:11 PM

To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donald Williams/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc: David Bary/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Stephen Tzhone/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Virginia Haithcock/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

Subject: EPA narrows search for Las Cruces pollution source

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KOB-TV, Channel 4, Albuquerque, NM

EPA narrows search for Las Cruces pollution source

Last Update: 11/18/2003 10:53:46 AM

By: Associated Press

(Las Cruces-AP) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has shortened its list of possible sources of pollution at a Las Cruces Superfund site.

The contamination forced the closure of two water wells in 1995 and 2001.

They were closed after tests found high traces of PCE (perchloroethylene) -- a chlorinated solvent used in dry cleaning or to remove grease.

Three other wells have shown traces of PCE, but they're still in operation because the levels are not high enough to close them down.

PCE is suspected of causing cancer, liver damage and birth defects in high doses.

The contamination affects groundwater and soil near a site and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet below the surface.

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Note: This news article is intended to provide staff of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with noteworthy media coverage directly related to the agency's work. The article may include mention of EPA, staff quotes or topics that are of scientific or environmental interest to the agency. The content is taken directly from online news media sources and is presented as published. As such, the article does not necessarily reflect the views of the management or staff of EPA and may contain inaccuracies.

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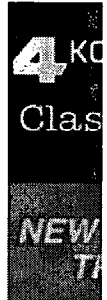
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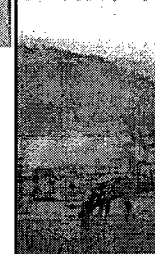
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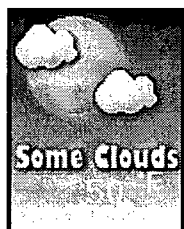


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Tuesday, November 18, 2003

EPA Narrows Search for Las Cruces Water Pollution Source

LAS CRUCES, N.M. - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has shortened its list of possible sources of pollution at a Las Cruces Superfund site that forced the closure of two city wells.

The wells were shut down in 1995 and 2001 after tests found high traces of perchloroethylene, PCE, a chlorinated solvent used in dry cleaning or to remove grease. Three other wells have shown traces of PCE but are still in operation because the levels are not high enough to close them down.

PCE is suspected of causing cancer, liver damage and birth defects in high doses.

The contamination affects groundwater and soil near a site and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet below the surface.

The EPA, in a report made public Monday, said the contamination occurred no later than the early 1980s at a former National Guard Armory; the old city-owned airport east of the armory; the city fleet maintenance yard; Dona Ana County's transportation department maintenance yard; or illegal dumping in an old arroyo, part of which is now used for storm drainage.

Eleven other sites also were tested, and 10 might warrant further

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investigation, the EPA said. However, the report said it's unlikely any of those sites were the source.

The next step will to determine whether to clean up the site, leave it or treat the contaminated water, EPA spokesman Dave Bary said. Bary said the study could take up to a year.

The EPA will continue to try to identify the actual pollution source, he said.

To date, the EPA has spent \$1.2 million on the site, Bary said.

Reader Comments

Posted: Tuesday, November 18, 2003

by: **le roy sedillo**

clean water, and fresh clean air, isn't it nice to be in the land of enchantment?

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Dana Bahar
<dana_bahar@nmenv.
state.nm.us>

02/13/2004 04:33 PM

To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Dan Santantonio
<dansant@las-cruces.org>, Luis Moralez
<luismo@co.dona-ana.nm.us>

cc: George Schuman <George_Schuman@nmenv.state.nm.us>, David
Mayerson <david_mayerson@nmenv.state.nm.us>

Subject: FW: Superfund

Hi all,

NMED recently was posed the questions about the Griggs and Walnut Plume and the Fruit Avenue Plume in Albuquerque by Josef Brachmeier, an independent reporter. Attached are the questions and our responses.

Thank you,

Dana

----- Message from "Jon Goldstein" <jon_goldstein@nmenv.state.nm.us> on Fri, 13 Feb 2004 15:23:36 -0700 -----

To: <josefbachmeier@yahoo.com>

cc: "George Schuman" <george_schuman@nmenv.state.nm.us>, "Dana Bahar"
<dana_bahar@nmenv.state.nm.us>

Subject Superfund

:

Josef, I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you need anything else.

Jon Goldstein



Superfund.doc

The following are my questions regarding the Griggs & Walnut Ground Water Plume in Las Cruces, NM and the Fruit Avenue Plume site in Albuquerque, NM.

1) How many local wells are affected?

Griggs and Walnut Plume Site:

Five City of Las Cruces municipal wells have had measurable concentrations of perchloroethylene (PCE). Two wells were taken off line, one in September 1996 and the other in August 2001. It is unclear whether contamination in one of the five wells is related to the Griggs and Walnut Plume. The Las Cruces Municipal water system is and has been in complete compliance with the drinking water standards established by the Safe Drinking Water Act and the New Mexico Water Supply Regulations.

One private well, which is not currently being used as source of domestic water supply for the residence, has had measurable concentrations of PCE, but these levels are below compliance standards.

Fruit Avenue Plume Site:

Two production wells, the former Coca-Cola well and the Rutledge Linen production wells were impacted and were abandoned as a consequence of the Fruit Avenue Plume contamination. Two hospital wells, St. Joseph's Hospital Well and Presbyterian Hospital Well have also had detectable concentrations of trichloroethene (TCE). St. Joseph's Hospital has taken their well off line because concentrations approached and occasionally exceeded Safe Drinking Water Act Standards. The Fruit Avenue Plume contamination has not yet reached any of the City of Albuquerque municipal supply wells, although it is moving towards the Yale well field. In short, if not addressed, TCE will likely contaminate municipal supply wells for the City of Albuquerque.

2) How serious is the contamination in these wells?

Griggs and Walnut:

The Safe Drinking Water Act standard for PCE is 5 micrograms per liter. The City of Las Cruces has taken mitigating steps to ensure that no water above the standard is delivered into the system. Three of the five affected wells have had PCE concentrations above the standard. Two wells have been taken off line and a third is being blended with water from other non-impacted wells to ensure compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and the New Mexico Water Supply Regulations.

The goal of the Superfund program as dictated by statute and regulation is to protect human health and the environment. Statute and regulation require the clean up of current or potential sources of drinking water to standards established under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Because the contaminated aquifer at the Griggs and Walnut Plume Site meets the definition of current or potential source of drinking water, EPA is mandated to clean up the contaminated groundwater at the site.

The Las Cruces municipal water system is and has been in complete compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and the New Mexico Water Supply Regulations and thus has never distributed water above the standard to its customers.

Fruit Avenue Plume:

Two production wells have had to be plugged and abandoned and one hospital well has been taken off line resulting in greater reliance on the City of Albuquerque municipal water supply system. The Fruit Avenue Plume is moving towards the Yale well field and if not addressed, TCE will likely contaminate municipal supply wells for the City of Albuquerque.

3) What is the immediate threat? Is there one?

Action is being taken at both these sites to protect ground water as a current and potential source of drinking water in accordance with Superfund statute and regulations.

4) If this information is not available or if the answer to this question has not been established, when will it be available?

Not Applicable.

5) How important is this site? Is action urgent?

The Griggs and Walnut Plume Superfund site qualified for placement on the National Priorities List i.e., became a "Superfund site" because of the presence of contamination above SWDA standards in a current or potential source of drinking water. Action is being taken at this site to protect ground water as a current and potential source of drinking water in accordance with Superfund statute and regulations. While activities are being undertaken to assess the site and develop a response to the contamination, the City of Las Cruces continues to manage its municipal water system to ensure compliance with all drinking water standards established by the Safe Drinking Water Act and the New Mexico Water Supply Regulations.

Similarly the Fruit Avenue site Plume qualified for placement on the National Priorities List because of the presence of contamination above SWDA standards in a current or potential source of drinking water. Action is being taken at this site to protect ground water as a current and potential source of drinking water in accordance with Superfund statute and regulations. Several wells have been abandoned as a result of the contamination and to protect human health by eliminating a potential exposure pathway.

6) Why has a site like Fruit Avenue, one with no immediate threat, been given such high priority when a site like GWP has already contaminated Las Cruces'

water supply?

Both the Fruit Avenue Plume and the Griggs and Walnut Plume Superfund sites have been placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) to address contaminated aquifers that are current or potential sources of drinking water. The Fruit Avenue Plume was placed on the NPL in 1999 and the site characterization and remedy selection/design phases are complete, whereas the Griggs and Walnut Plume Site was listed in 2001 and is still in the site characterization phase. Like the Fruit Avenue Plume site, the Griggs and Walnut plume site will be eligible for clean up funding when the remedy selection/design phase is complete.

Because the contaminated aquifers at the Fruit Avenue Plume Site and the Griggs and Walnut Plume Site meet the definition of current or potential sources of drinking water, EPA is mandated to clean up the contaminated groundwater at both sites, thus sites placed on the NPL that have contaminated wells or NPL sites with wells that may become contaminated must be addressed in accordance with Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) statute and regulation .

7) Does the State intend to post its 10% of the cost to remediate the Fruit Avenue Superfund site?

We are currently working with the state legislature to insure that funds are available to meet the state's cost share obligations at Superfund sites in New Mexico including the Fruit Avenue Plume site. The State legislature has been supportive of efforts to cleanup contaminated aquifers through the Superfund Program in the past and we are hopeful that this will continue.

8) Is the Env. Department aware of the alternative remedies, some of which would be as effective for \$150,000 (over 2 years) as opposed to the EPA's/CH2M Hill's approximately \$18,000,000 (over 20-30 years)?

The Superfund Program has a well-defined remedy selection process that mandates opportunities for public comment. CERCLA Section 121(b)(1) declares a Congressional preference for remedial actions that permanently and significantly reduce volume, toxicity, or mobility of hazardous substances over remedial actions not involving treatment. CERCLA also sets forth five principal requirements for the selection of remedies: 1) protect human health and the environment; 2) comply with applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements unless a waiver is justified; 3) be cost effective; 4) utilize permanent solutions and alternative treatment or resource recovery technologies to the maximum extent practicable; and 5) satisfy a preference for treatment as a principal element, or provide an explanation in the Record or Decision as to why this preference was not met.

EPA developed nine criteria for evaluating remedial alternatives to ensure that all important considerations are factored into the remedy selection decisions. These criteria

are derived from the statutory requirements listed above. The nine criteria analysis comprises two steps: an individual analysis of each alternative with respect to each criterion, and a comparison of options to determine the relative performance of the alternatives and identify major trade-offs among them (i.e., relative advantages and disadvantages).

The above process was followed for the Fruit Avenue Plume remedy selection. Each alternative including no action and monitored natural attenuation was evaluated and presented in the feasibility study. The selected remedy was chosen because it best meets all the statutory requirements. Specifically it protects human health and the environment; complies with applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements; utilizes a permanent solution and alternative treatment or resource recovery technologies to the maximum extent practicable; satisfies a preference for treatment as a principal element; and is cost effective for the level of protection it provides.

The selected remedy combines soil vapor extraction to address the soil and hot spot treatment and Shallow, Intermediate and Deep Zone restoration through pump and treat technology with a reinjection component for the ground water. This alternative provides the best balance of tradeoffs among the alternatives with respect to the nine criteria evaluated. It offers the highest degree of protection of human health and the environment due to a reduction of mass and volume of contaminants in all three aquifer zones in the shortest timeframe. In addition, this alternative achieves the high degree of protectiveness and its cost is proportional to its overall effectiveness. Other alternatives were rejected primarily because of limited overall effectiveness. For example although monitored natural attenuation was considered it had to be rejected as a stand-alone remedy because of the lack of evidence throughout the extent of the plume that the contaminants would be reduced sufficiently to attain clean up goals.

The above remedy selection process will be followed for the Griggs and Walnut Plume site as mandated by Superfund statute and regulations.

9) Who can I talk to in the Las Cruces area about the GWP site? Are there community groups involved? Is there a site representative in the Las Cruces area?

US EPA Remedial Project Manager: Petra Sanchez (214) 665-6686

NM Environment Department Superfund Oversight Section Project Manager: Dana Bahar (505) 827-2908

City of Las Cruces Regulatory Compliance Officer: Dan Santantonio (505) 528-3548

Dona Ana County Environmental Services Administrator: Luis Morales (505) 647-7116

City Councillor: Dolores Archuleta (505) 660-2071

Please contact EPA (Petra Sanchez) for further information regarding community involvement at the site.

10) Are residents of Las Cruces aware? If so are they

concerned??

One City and three EPA sponsored public meetings/open houses have been held in Las Cruces since 2001. A site repository is maintained at the Thomas Branigan Library in Las Cruces. EPA and NMED have also responded to individual concerns about the site as they have arisen.

Please contact EPA (Petra Sanchez) for further information regarding community involvement and outreach efforts at the site.

Finally a site summary is available for the Griggs and Walnut Plume Site at <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/nplfs/fs0605116.pdf> and <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/nplfs/fs0604068.pdf> for the Fruit Avenue Plume Site

Cynthia Fanning

10/31/01 11:13 AM

To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Beverly Negri/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donn Walters/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, June Buzzell/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donald Williams/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc:

Subject: New time, place set for Superfund hearing

<http://www.lcsun-news.com/Stories/0,1002,7444%257E204007,00.html>

New time, place set for Superfund hearing

By Christopher Schurtz
Sun-News

The federal government has apparently decided it is now safe to talk about water contamination.

After canceling a public hearing on the Walnut and Griggs Superfund site originally scheduled for the week of the Sept. 11 attacks, the Environmental Protection Agency has rescheduled the hearing for Thursday, Nov. 8, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Hermosa Heights Elementary School, 1655 E. Amador Avenue.

As in previous public hearings on the issue, EPA representatives will be joined by city and state officials to discuss several contaminated city wells located in the area of Walnut Drive and Griggs Avenue.

The first city well in the area, Well 18, was shut down in 1995 after New Mexico Environmental Department inspectors discovered higher-than-allowed levels of perchloroethylene or PCE, a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal.

The chemical is also believed by the EPA to cause liver damage and lead to cancer in levels of 5.0 micrograms per liter of PCE. Well 18 showed levels as high as 32 micrograms of PCE per liter.

The high amount found is attributable to the PCE building up in the well lines, rather than a true measure of the amount of PCE in the well, according to the city utilities department.

A second well, Well 27, was found to have 4.9 micrograms per liter of PCE. The measurement is just .1 micrograms below the EPA limit of 5 micrograms per liter.

Well 27 had been taken off line for repairs in February. When it was turned back on in June, state environmental tests showed PCE levels at 4.5 micrograms.

Utilities Regulatory Compliance Officer Dan Santantonio said the well was shut off as a precaution. He said it was unlikely PCE levels in the well were going to level off, but would likely continue to increase. It remains off-line.

Three other wells in the area -- wells 21, 19 and 24 -- have shown varying traces of PCE, but none have shown a significant increase in PCE levels, Santantonio said.

New All four wells with some degree of contamination have been tested every month by the Mexico Environmental Department, at the city's request.

But as of Tuesday, no change in PCE levels was reported by the city.

2M Hill, has Santantonio said the contractor doing the work on the site, the Dallas-based firm CH already submitted a draft plan for the site to the city and the EPA.

agency will pick If the contractor cannot determine the party responsible for the contamination, the up 90 percent of the cost of the clean-up, with the city picking up the rest.

The cost is far from being determined but will likely be in the millions of dollars.

EPA's The city's involvement with the site at this point will likely be minimal, as it is now the project, Santantonio said. He said he is not sure what the EPA will discuss at the public meeting, but conjectured the EPA may discuss specifics in the proposed plan.

concentration of There are also signs those living in the Superfund site may be getting a higher PCE than city residents living outside the contaminated area.

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Morales The dilution effect of the city's water system was not as efficient as previously thought, said.

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it is Most of the time, ground water drawn during the day goes directly from the well, where treated with small amounts of chlorine, into city water lines and on to residential taps, Morales said.

during Excess water is directed into one of several city storage tanks. The tanks are also filled
city for the the evening to help create water pressure and to provide for water to the rest of the
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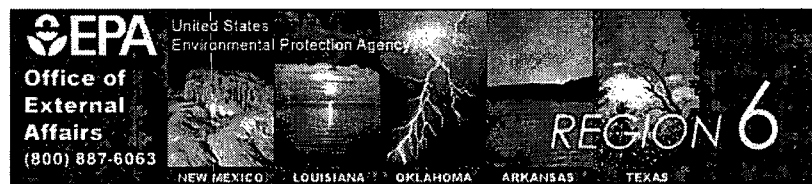
areas around Morales said the dynamic nature of the system allows for water to be distributed to
the city according to demand.

problematic The same system, however, makes tracking water drawn from a specific well
depending on because water can be drawn from varying sources throughout any given day,
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used by But Morales said prior to the well being shut down, it is likely that much of the water
residents in the area of the Superfund site came from Well 27.

filters are For those interested in treating water at their taps, reverse osmosis filters and charcoal
methods effective in eliminating PCE from the water.

needed But Santantonio said the EPA levels in the city water supply are safe and filters are not
because the city is steadfastly monitoring PCE and other contaminant levels.



January 11, 2001

Las Cruces Site Proposed to Federal Superfund List

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposes to add the Griggs & Walnut Ground Water Plume site in Las Cruces, New Mexico, to the federal Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). The solvent perchloroethylene (PCE) has been detected above health-based maximum contaminant levels in groundwater monitoring wells in the Santa Fe Group aquifer, which is the primary source of drinking, agricultural and industrial water for the city of Las Cruces.

"Adding this site to the Superfund list makes federal dollars available, allowing EPA and the New Mexico Environment Department to speed their cleanup and meet the agencies' commitment to protecting public health and our environment," EPA Regional Administrator Gregg Cooke said.

The city of Las Cruces water supply system is in compliance with the New Mexico Water Supply Regulations. Las Cruces uses 28 municipal supply wells to provide drinking water to approximately 83,000 individuals.

Routine sampling of municipal supply wells identified the presence of PCE beginning in 1995. An investigative ground water study by the New Mexico Environment Department showed PCE at levels above the standard in seven out of 10 monitoring wells.

PCE is a man-made substance widely used for dry cleaning fabrics and textiles and for metal degreasing operations. It is also used as a starting material (building block) for the production of other man-made chemicals. The source of the PCE contamination underlying Las Cruces has not been established.

The EPA Superfund program works closely with state agencies to clean and restore uncontrolled contaminated properties. Superfund cleans sites when the work required is beyond the resources of state and local agencies.

EPA will seek public comments for 60 days on adding this site to the NPL. Those comments will be addressed before the Agency makes the final decision about adding the site to the NPL. During this public comment period, the Agency will continue to develop cleanup plans so that actual work may begin as quickly after NPL listing as possible.

Send comments by March 12, 2001, to Docket Coordinator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, CERCLA Docket Office (Mail Code 5201 G), Ariel Rios Building, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460, 703.603.9232.

Comments may also be submitted by express mail. Send original and three copies of comments (no facsimiles or tapes) to Docket Coordinator, Headquarters, U.S. EPA, CERCLA Docket Office, 1235 Jefferson Davis Highway, Crystal Gateway #1, First Floor, Arlington, VA 22202, or by e-mail in ASCII format only to superfund.docket@epa.gov.

Additional information about this site is available on the EPA web site at <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/new/newnpl.htm>.

###

For more information contact the Office of External Affairs at (214) 665-2200.

Cynthia Fanning
06/15/01 11:34 AM

To: Beverly Negri/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Brenda
Cook/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA,
Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc:
Subject: Local site added to Superfund list

<http://www.lcsun-news.com/>

Local site added to Superfund list
Associated Press and staff reports

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has added a contaminated ground water site in east Las Cruces to its Superfund list of most hazardous toxic waste sites in the nation.

The agency announced it will earmark millions of federal dollars to investigate and help clean up contaminated ground water at the site, located near Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street.

The ground water is contaminated with perchloroethylene (PCE), which is a chlorinated solvent used for dry cleaning and removing grease from metal.

The source of the contamination is not known.

George Schuman, a geologist/project manager with the New Mexico Environment Department, confirmed Thursday the site is now on the EPA's Superfund national priorities list.

Sites on the list are eligible for federal funds if a potentially responsible party with financial resources to fund such a cleanup does not exist.

Schuman said money has been made available to begin the process of remedial investigation in which an EPA contractor will take samples of water.

Schuman said he doesn't know exactly how much money the EPA will spend for the investigation and cleanup.

Petra Sanchez, an EPA official based in Dallas, was unavailable for comment on Friday.

Previously, Schuman said that cleaning up a contaminated site could cost \$10.5 million and take up to three years to complete, while an investigation could last up to two years.

"They're developing a work plan now, (which means) the installation of more ground water monitoring wells," he said Thursday.

Last year, the New Mexico Environment Department reported that low concentrations of PCE were found in several city wells located near the intersection of east Griggs Avenue and Walnut Street.

"The plume is somewhat large, a mile by a half mile," Schuman said.

One city well, known as 18, was decommissioned because it showed levels of 32 micrograms per liter, in 1995. PCE levels in that well have fluctuated since then.

Three others, wells 19, 21 and 27, also showed low levels of the chemical.

According to the EPA, there is some evidence that a lifetime of exposure to PCE, in amounts above 5 micrograms per liter, may have the potential to cause cancer.

The Las Cruces site extends from Griggs Avenue north past Hadley Avenue and from Interstate 25 east past Solano Drive.

The contamination was discovered during routine sampling of municipal wells in 1993.

The Las Cruces water system meets the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, according to state officials.

The Las Cruces site is among 10 new sites -- six in New England -- added Thursday to the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list of most hazardous toxic waste sites in the nation.

The EPA, spending as much as \$1.5 billion a year for Superfund cleanups, also proposes adding another 10 sites to the list. The public has 60 days to comment on those.

One site is a creek contaminated with PCBs in Darby Township, Pa., flowing into the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge where federal officials caution people against eating the fish.

Another is a 150-acre former hazardous waste storage site in Texas City, Texas, leaking chromium and lead into 600-mile Galveston Bay -- the seventh-largest estuary in the nation and a major commercial and recreation fishery.

Then there is the abandoned copper mine in Strafford, Vt., closed in 1958, but still pumping metals and sulfides into the Copperas Brook and West Branch of the Ompompanoosuc River.

"Every time we clean up a Superfund site, we reclaim part of our past and secure a cleaner, safer future for our children," EPA Administrator Christie Whitman said Thursday. "This is a top priority for the EPA as well as the president."

With these latest actions, announced in the Federal Register, the EPA's Superfund program has 1,236 sites and 67 proposed for agency action. The combined 1,303 includes 166 federal facilities.

Only about 15 percent of the nation's Superfund sites have been cleaned and removed from the list since it was created two decades ago.

The Superfund program's aim is to try to force polluters to pay to clean up toxic sites they either created or made worse, but critics say Superfund often relies on litigation to recover cleanup costs. And that, say industry representatives, often means ensnaring innocent business owners.

Last month, the House passed a bill to protect small businesses from big polluters trying to make them share Superfund costs. Whitman said the Bush administration supports the bill, since multiplying lawsuits have diverted resources from cleanup work.

"The less litigation we have, the more likely we finish the job of cleaning up Superfund sites," she said.

The EPA puts sites on the list based on its studies of the risks to human health and the environment from uncontrolled hazardous substances in ground and surface water, soil and air. States also have a say in deciding priorities.

In December, the Superfund program turned 20 years old. Congress passed the legislation in 1980 in the wake of the Love Canal toxic waste crisis. The Niagara Falls, N.Y., neighborhood had been built on and around a former chemical dump and by the 1960s and '70s, contaminated ground water was leaching into back yards and school grounds.

Love Canal has since become a Superfund success, with the cleanup making habitable the outer rim of the contaminated area and more than 200 homes there have been built or renovated.

The EPA is proposing 10 new Superfund sites in Casmalia, Calif.; LaSalle, Ill.; Louisville, Miss.; Central Islip, N.Y.; Hazle Township and West Hazleton, Pa.; Richland Township, Pa.; Deer Park, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; Eureka, Utah; and Vershire, Vt.

Cynthia Fanning

10/31/01 11:13 AM

To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Beverly Negri/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donn Walters/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, June Buzzell/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donald Williams/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc:

Subject: New time, place set for Superfund hearing

<http://www.lcsun-news.com/Stories/0,1002,7444%257E204007,00.html>

New time, place set for Superfund hearing

By Christopher Schurtz
Sun-News

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Three other wells in the area -- wells 21, 19 and 24 -- have shown varying traces of PCE, but none have shown a significant increase in PCE levels, Santantonio said.

All four wells with some degree of contamination have been tested every month by the New Mexico Environmental Department, at the city's request.

But as of Tuesday, no change in PCE levels was reported by the city.

Santantonio said the contractor doing the work on the site, the Dallas-based firm CH 2M Hill, has already submitted a draft plan for the site to the city and the EPA.

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The cost is far from being determined but will likely be in the millions of dollars.

The city's involvement with the site at this point will likely be minimal, as it is now the EPA's project, Santantonio said. He said he is not sure what the EPA will discuss at the public meeting, but conjectured the EPA may discuss specifics in the proposed plan.

There are also signs those living in the Superfund site may be getting a higher concentration of PCE than city residents living outside the contaminated area.

At a public meeting in June, Olga Morales, environmental specialist for the local office of the NMED, said levels as high as 3.5 micrograms per liter were detected in tests taken earlier this year of residential tap water from houses within the Superfund site.

The dilution effect of the city's water system was not as efficient as previously thought, Morales said.

City Water Resources Director Gilbert Morales said in August that water drawn from the wells in the Superfund site is the primary source of water to those living within the site.

Most of the time, ground water drawn during the day goes directly from the well, where it is treated with small amounts of chlorine, into city water lines and on to residential taps, Morales said.

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Petra Sanchez
01/10/2005 03:43 PM

To: Chris Schurtz <cschurtz@lcsun-news.com>
cc:
Subject: Re: sun-news story 

Thanks Chris.

Petra Sanchez, 6SF-LT
Remedial Project Manager
US EPA Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue Suite 1200
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To: Petra Sanchez/R6/USEPA/US@EPA
cc:
Subject: sun-news story

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The following appeared in the Dec. 21 edition of the Las Cruces Sun-News:

The council approved...

€ the same action approved last week by the Doña Ana County Commission that paves the way for the county and city to send the EPA a good faith settlement offer regarding the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site. The proposed agreement calls for the EPA to conclude \$1 million more in study, with the city and county picking up the tab, and for both the city and county to be involved in that study.

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From Las Cruces Sun-News

NEWS

EPA to update Superfund status

Christopher Schurtz/Sun-News reporter
Jul 21, 2005, 10:19 pm

Officials with the Environmental Protection Agency will be in Las Cruces tonight to update residents on the Griggs-Walnut Superfund site.

The city shut down a city well in 1995 and one in 2001 after they showed high traces of perchloroethylene, or PCE, an industrial solvent used to remove grease from metal or in dry cleaning.

In very high doses, PCE is believed by the EPA to possibly cause cancer, as well as liver damage and birth defects.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry has determined contaminant levels are not high enough to pose a health risk to residents here.

The affected area is centralized in groundwater wells and soil near Griggs and Walnut avenues, and extends in a large underground plume more than 100 feet underground.

The plume extends from Interstate 25 and goes west roughly between Hadley and Griggs avenues to North Solano Drive.

Because the city and county own the properties where the contamination is believed to have emanated from at some point more than 30 years ago, under EPA regulations they are jointly responsible for paying for the rest of the study and cleanup.

City Regulatory Compliance officer Dan Santantonio said the meeting tonight "is really going to be a matter of bringing people up to date about what's happened so far."

The city and county have already agreed to work with the EPA on the rest of the study, which could be complete by next summer.

"I don't think there's a whole lot of controversy over what needs to be done," Santantonio said.

The city also will use its existing hydrology consultant Schumaker Associates to do studies to better understand the flow of the water plume, and has committed \$1.2 million in its most recent budget for the Superfund site.

Santantonio said the city and county may know by next summer what will happen next, in terms of treatment.

That could be done in a variety of ways — some cheap, others expensive — but it's likely the affected wells would be used in conjunction with a treatment facility.

The EPA said it's reserving its right to ask the city and county to pay the more than \$3.8 million in costs it's incurred since 2001, saying "while we are not looking for a settlement regarding EPA's cost of recovery claim at this point, we may do so in the future."

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(updated 12/19/2002).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in cooperation with the City of Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, and the New Mexico Environment Department, is in the process of completing its Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study of the Griggs and Walnut Ground Water Plume Superfund site.

Additional data is needed to complete the understanding of contamination from shallow soil vapor in some potential exposure areas, and from ground water in areas not previously sampled:

- Shallow soil vapor data will be collected using a hand-held sampling device in residential yards north of the Hadley/Walnut intersection; on the ground outside the Meerscheidt Recreation Center; and at the Police Athletic League facility.
- Two new ground water wells will be drilled to complete the definition of groundwater contamination. One east of I-25 along the flood control dam, and one south of Griggs and west of Walnut, along either Willow or Cottonwood St.
- A new soil vapor monitor point will be drilled between the ground surface and the water table in area of the County yard north of Griggs Avenue and west of Walnut Street to help evaluate the relation between observed soil vapor contamination and ground water contamination.

Drilling has begun and will continue through November 18th. Collection of ground water samples from all new and existing wells will start the week of November 28, and continue through December 9. Shallow soil vapor measurements in residential yards and around recreational facilities will start the week of November 7, and continue through November 16.

Specific dates are subject to change depending upon weather, staff and equipment availability. Individual property owners will be notified in advance of the specific date that the EPA, or its contractor, will be on site.